

# POLANYI AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

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Since I first met Polanyi when I was in psychiatry residency at Duke University (1962-4), his work has exerted a continuing influence on my understanding of psychoanalysis, specifically the branch of psychoanalysis called *analytical psychology*, founded by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung. In the present context, I wish to discuss briefly four areas in which Polanyi's thought has influenced or deepened my understanding of Jung's psychoanalytic theory. These are: (1) the compensatory nature of dreaming, including the function of unanalyzed dreams; (2) focal/tacit distinctions as a finer discrimination of conscious/unconscious; (3) dynamo-objective coupling (moral inversion) as informing the psychoanalytic theories of defense mechanisms and neurosis; and (4) an appreciation of "indwelling" as a concept useful in conceptualizing many psychological processes.

## The Compensatory Nature of Dreams

Polanyi did not relate his epistemology to psychoanalysis. In 1968 I discussed with Polanyi, in Oxford, my intent to base a thesis at the Jung Institute in Zurich on his work. I wished to examine the problematical relationship of the dream-ego and the waking-ego as a shift in the tacit structure of psychological complexes underlying the sense of personal identity in both the waking and the dreaming state. Polanyi had no objection to my project, and offered encouragement and advice. But he had no particular interest in psychoanalysis, although he had used Freudian psychoanalysis as an example of a dynamo-objective coupling (Polanyi, 1958, p. 233). During that visit, Polanyi told me that his disinterest in psychoanalysis was partially based on a negative opinion of one of his childhood classmates who later became an important Freudian.

This Zurich thesis on dreams was published, in slightly modified form, as the seventh chapter of *Clinical Uses of Dreams* (Hall, 1977/1991) and also discussed elsewhere (Hall 1982, 1983, 1984a, 1986). The essential insight was that the waking-ego (the enduring sense of "I", including the body image) indwells in all the unconscious complexes in the psyche, while the dream-ego (the sense of "I" in the dream) tacitly identifies with only some of the complexes that comprise the tacit compartment of the waking-ego.

Jung coined the term "complex" or "emotionally toned complex" to mean a group of related "images" based upon an archetypal core and tending to have a common emotional tone. His major works on complex theory are contained in his book *Experimental Researches* (CW2). A complex is more than a collection of "images" in a visual sense; it is more like an icon on a computer screen. If activated, a complex tends to determine ego-identity, emotion, and the form

in which significant other persons are perceived.

In a dream, the dream-ego is able to interact focally with some of the complexes that are tacit to the waking-ego. This is rather like being able to do surgery on oneself. By observing changes in emotional behavior that occur *after* a dream that seems to change the structure of certain complexes but *before* the dream is discussed with an analyst, it is possible to infer that unremembered dreams may lead to significant change in personality (Hall, 1977/1991, pp. 151-161).

Jung viewed dreams as compensatory to the views of the waking-ego, correcting conscious distortions or one-sided emphasis (CW8, par. 250). This has traditionally been viewed as the remembered dream constituting a model in consciousness of the unconscious content that contains the compensatory material in symbolic form (Jung uses “symbol” to mean the best current representation of an unspecifiable range of potential meaning.). When the remembered dream is subjected to a formal process of Jungian analysis there is added another compensatory form--the conscious intellectual understanding of a possible meaning of the symbolic dream. This conscious understanding aids in recognizing conscious situations and other dreams that have a similar symbolic meaning, a second form of the compensatory nature of dreams. The direct action of the dream-ego to alter the structure of complexes that form the tacit basis of identity for the waking-ego constitutes yet a third and novel form of compensation (Hall, 1982).

## **Focal/Tacit and Conscious/Unconscious**

The basic “topographical” distinction of psychoanalytic theory is conscious/unconscious. This terminology is inherently confusing, since one term, “the unconscious,” is defined as what is not in the other term, consciousness. But consciousness itself is virtually impossible to define clearly! Furthermore, there are continual shifts in the boundary between consciousness and the unconscious. A memory that is conscious at one moment may be unconscious at the next, often for apparently psychodynamic reasons.

Polanyi (1958, p. 92) clearly states the independence of the subsidiary or tacit component of knowledge from the distinction of conscious/unconscious:

While focal awareness is necessarily conscious, subsidiary awareness may vary over all degrees of consciousness.

It would seem that the distinction of focal/subsidiary (which I prefer to restate as focal/tacit) is a more discriminating language for the discussion of many observations than is the traditional distinction of conscious/unconscious. Within a dream, for instance, the dream-ego is “conscious” of some contents of the dream and still has a from-to structure--from the tacit or subsidiary complexes upon which it is based in the dream *toward* other contents of the dream, which are themselves images of complexes. From the point of view of the waking-ego, however, the *entire* experience of the dream is unconscious.

## **Dynamo-Objective Coupling (Moral Inversion):**

Both Jung and Michael Polanyi find an innate moral tendency in mankind. This is explicit in Polanyi (it is what is consciously denied in moral inversion) and is implicit, it seems to me, in Jung’s writings, particularly in the universal differentiation of the human psyche into ego-persona and shadow, based on moral self-judgements in childhood.

Contents that are considered “good” are assigned to the self-image and the personal, while their “bad” opposites fall into the field of the shadow, an alter-ego personality like the Mr. Hyde of the ego’s Dr. Jekyll. Much psychotherapy and analysis, in fact, consists of no more than bringing these often archaic moral choices into focal conscious awareness for re-decision by the more mature adult mind.

Polanyi noted that in the early decades of this century, many western intellectuals were attracted to Marxism, which appeared to be a deterministic and amoral theory of history that seemed to undermine the open search for intellectual truth, the central value of those same intellectuals who were attracted to it. Why was this so? In answer, Polanyi defined the structure of *dynamo-objective coupling* as underlying a particularly pernicious form of totalitarian danger in the modern world (Polanyi 1958, pp. 235-237).

A *dynamo-objective coupling*, according to Polanyi, is a “moral inversion” in which a repressed moral belief is consciously denied in the service of a presumed objectivity. This had affected many modern intellectuals. As a result there was no conscious outlet for the innate moral passions. A *dynamo-objective coupling*, such as Marxism, allows an outlet for these moral passions while preserving the conscious illusion of objectivity. This results in covert unconscious moral actions which lack the moral and ethical limitations of a consciously held morality. Thus quite inhumane actions may be undertaken for “objective” reasons.

A *dynamo-objective coupling* is extremely difficult to alter. If attacked on objective grounds, it is defended with all the moral fervor of the covert moral position; and if attacked on moral grounds, it is defended as a completely “objective” position having nothing to do with morality. This is the structure of militant Marxism, actively formenting the overthrow of governments in order to further a process that is theoretically said to occur through historical necessity independent of conscious intentions. Moral inversion is also explanatory of the structure of collective shadows, those projected from one nation or race upon another (Hall, 1987).

The structure of *dynamo-objective coupling* is also a major basis of neurosis and neurotic defense mechanisms in individuals (Hall, 1984b). When used as a global defense, I have referred to the neurotic *dynamo-objective coupling* as “*pseudo-objectivity*.” In the pervasive form of an established neurotic personality pattern, there is a covert negative moral judgement of the self-image, with a resultant sense that the shadow is a false “true self.” The *anima/animus*, actually the principle of relationship, then functions in a negative and defensive manner. Such a neurotic pattern is essentially unassailable from outside. It must be raised to consciousness, faced with courage, and may be undone only from inside the neurotic psyche.

## Indwelling

Indwelling is a concept that ranges, in Polanyi’s (1968) model, from the use of tools (p. 59) to the transmission of culture (p. 173), appreciation of art (p. 194), and the ability to experience religious ritual (279-80). A human person ordinarily indwells in a stable body image and may even add tools, such as probes, to extend the subsidiary range of bodily awareness. The concept of indwelling is also useful in conceptualizing the relationship of dream-ego and waking-ego, in understanding some unusual states that seem to be related to activated archetypes, and in explaining the profound changes in self-image that occur with the successful treatment of psychoneurosis. Fingarette (1963, p. 301-3) compares the self-experience of a Zen master with that of a woman who has undergone successful (Freudian) psychoanalysis for a problem of excessive anger with a close friend. It is clear that both the woman and the Zen master are indwelling in the structure of their minds in a manner quite different from the ordinary mode of consciousness. A

Jungian might ask “*what* is it that indwells?” And in classical Jungian theory, the answer, finally, is “the Archetypal Self,” which is larger than the self-image (ego-image) and able to paradoxically “dwell” in more than one attitude of mind simultaneously.

## Differences in Polanyi and Jung

While Polanyi’s work is very informative of many difficult areas of Jungian psychology, I do not wish to leave the impression that there are no significant stresses between Jung and Polanyi. First, of course, they pursued very different universes of discourse. Polanyi was primarily concerned with the epistemology of the scientific method while Jung was essentially a physician and an empiricist, concerned with finding curative methods. Thus their fields of data are quite divergent.

As a psychiatrist, Jung was concerned with affects and emotional disorders. The concept of emotionally-toned complex was a central concern. Polanyi was not directly concerned with the range of emotions, but with the sense of discovery involved in fruitful scientific discovery. Their respective theories were designed to speak to different human needs.

Polanyi focused on how we obtain a knowledge of external reality. Jung looked toward an inner subjective reality, but called it the “objective psyche” when it reached a deeper, non-personal depth. Both Jung and Polanyi would agree, however, that there is an unavoidable element of personal risk and commitment in any action. There is no purely “objective” perception of the inner or outer worlds.

The most mysterious and non-empirical of Jung’s structural concepts, the Archetypal Self is the actual center of the psyche, both conscious and unconscious, while the ego is only the center of consciousness. The Archetypal Self is the psychological *imago Dei* in the psyche. It is considered to be (1) the totality of the psyche functioning as an organized field, (2) the image of such order (as in mandalas), and (3) the archetypal core of the conscious ego-complex, the “I-sayer.” The Archetypal Self may also be called the “Central Archetype” or “Central Archetype of Order.” It is in this concept, as well as his later view of archetypes as “psychoid” (underlying both the subjective and the objective worlds), that Jung’s depth psychology borders on religious questions (Hall, 1981) as well as avoiding dualism. I am not aware of any parallel or closely related concept in Polanyi’s work.

Jung is credited with the concept of psychological archetype. Although he did not speculate about the mechanism of their formation, Jung postulated that archetypes have a historical process of formation, perhaps roughly equivalent to the rise of the species. Archetypes are in some manner the residue of collective human experience. Polanyi seems to view reality as already formed but revealed in a continuing process of discovery of personal knowledge.

Both Jung and Polanyi clearly affirm the irreducible involvement of personal commitment in the perception and understanding of transpersonal reality. Jung, however, viewed the deepest layer of inner subjective reality, the collective unconscious or objective psyche, as a developing field. This stance reveals Jung as a radical constructivist, a view that is only recently being appreciated (Young-Eisendrath and Hall, 1991).

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