Addiction:
Modern Day
Jekyll and Hyde?

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by

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Abstract

Despite some major differences, Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud, the two leading figures in analytical psychology, held similar views on the role and responsibilities of the ego in the development and function of personality. Both Jung and Freud viewed the ego as directing the conscious behavior of the individual. This definition should never be confused with the common definition of ego, which often denotes selfishness or conceit and is considered “egocentric.” In Jungian terminology this is described as an inflated ego; in everyday language it is referred to as having a “big head.” The research described in this paper utilizes a Jungian approach in analyzing the existing literature to explain how the ego of an individual caught in an addiction is overcome and replaced by the addiction. The individual becomes completely subjected to the addiction, which takes the place of a higher power and becomes the decision maker for that person. The effects of addiction are memorably described in Robert Louis Stevenson’s 1886 novella The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.
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The dual nature of mankind entails the conflict between good and evil which exists in all of us. Robert Lewis Stevenson’s well-known novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, describes the transformation of a respected physician into a violent, bestial criminal through the use of a chemical designed to divide man’s good and evil natures. Dr. Jekyll becomes addicted to the emotional and physical release he receives through his evil actions as Mr. Hyde. Even after recognizing the terrible effects of the chemical, he finds himself unable to stop using it. His true self, the natural combination of good and evil, has been overcome by an addiction to pure evil.

Stevenson’s story has become ingrained in the collective imagination of most English speaking countries to the extent that many people know the plot even though they have never read the novel.

*Figure 1. Spencer Tracey as Jekyll and Hyde*
According to Stevenson, the plot of the story appeared to him in a startling dream presenting a benign character who suddenly transformed into a malevolent one. It is interesting to note that Stevenson’s novella, which was written fourteen years prior to Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* and several decades before Jung’s psychological works were published, can be interpreted as an early forecast and warning of future problems. Scholars and researchers who delve into the dual nature of good and evil in humans continually sift the messages from this story hoping to obtain additional enlightenment on the dual nature of humanity. Anyone interested in the problems of addiction is encouraged to become familiar with the novella’s accurate description of addiction and preview of current issues.

The current discussion focuses on chemical and alcohol addiction, only touching briefly on other topics of addiction such as sexual, eating, gambling, etc. It is acknowledged that a relatively broad segment of the general population would not agree that addressing the issue of addiction is worth the effort. This segment holds the opinion that this type of problem is caused by a lack of will power or self-control, laziness, or other personal weakness. It is hypothesized that many people in this segment of the population would respond affirmatively to the following question: “Have you ever known someone who was rapidly moving toward death by overindulgence in alcohol and who had received competent medical counseling warning that if they did not stop they would die in a short period of time, as well as receiving many expressions of concern from family and friends, but still refused to stop and did in fact die?” However, in spite of their positive response, these respondents would not agree the acquaintance was infected with an addiction which suspended and took over their decision making, but instead was
lacking in will power, was lazy, was self-destructive, or lacked self-control. The authors of this paper present a different view of addiction, maintaining that medical and research data provide conclusive evidence that individuals are victims of addiction, sometimes multiple in nature (Carnes, 2001, p. 19).

**Addiction and the Ego**

Both Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud, the two leading figures in analytical psychology, viewed the ego as directing the conscious behavior of the individual. In an effort to throw additional scientific light on psychological addiction, Schoen (2009) provides the following definition of addiction, which contains two key components:

First the addictive substance, activity, or behavior must ultimately take over complete and total control of the individual psychologically. That is, it must take over control of normal ego functioning, thoughts, emotions, perceptions, motivations, judgments, decisions, actions, and behaviors. And the second part of this definition is crucial: the addiction takes over control in an inherently destructive and ultimately life-threatening way. It is not an addiction unless it is a death sentence—not life in prison, not fifty years with probation or time off for good behavior. It is a death sentence of the mind, of the emotions, of the body, and of the spirit. It is a death sentence to the addict’s career, community, marriage, family and friends. It is not an addiction unless it has the lethal capacity and potential to kill the individual. It is not an addiction unless it is the most powerful, controlling, possessing, dictating, and determining agenda in the psyche. It must take precedence over everything else. (p. 3-4)
Dr. Jung frequently maintained that psychological messages often are communicated through poetry, drawings, art, religious texts, literature, myths, fables, and fairy tales. He was convinced that in most cases poets, authors, or artists did not intend to convey, and were not necessarily aware of, the deeper messages being communicated in their work, since these messages are drawn from a deeper part of the consciousness and are examples of knowledge that intrudes from the collective unconsciousness. Jung urged his students to become familiar with, pay close attention to, and make use of these sources of knowledge from the collective unconsciousness in their personal and professional lives.

**Figure 2. Model of Ego, Personal and Collective Unconsciousness**

Figure 2 has been developed in an attempt to present Dr. Jung’s philosophy and approach in a graphical form that may be more understandable in classrooms and
workshops. It is an attempt to help clarify, define, and explain and contrast mankind’s psychological nature and the respective characteristics of our conscious and subconscious minds. Fox (1940) draws particular attention to and commends Freud and Jung for their novel modern day research and work in this area; at the same time Fox notes that while the information may be new to the modern day period, it was known, understood, and utilized by many of ancient writers. Fox calls particular attention to the Old Testament Psalmist who wrote Psalm 91 and also the writings of Moses, Isaiah and John. (Fox, 2009, p. 61).

The well known, often-quoted story of Noah comes from early Jewish/Christian literature and provides a good example of lessons from the collective unconsciousness. The story tells how Jehovah, disturbed by the amount and intensity of evil in the world, sent a great flood in an attempt to wipe evil from the face of the earth. The entire population was destroyed except for Noah and his family, who were warned of the coming of the flood. After many days of rain and flooding, the waters finally subsided and God sent a messenger to assure Noah that it was safe for his family and the rescued animals to leave the Ark. (It is worth noting that the story of the Flood is common across many cultures, including most from the Fertile Crescent region, and demonstrates the depth and breadth of the collective unconsciousness.) After emerging from the Ark, Noah became drunk on wine and was mocked by his youngest son. In retaliation, Noah placed a curse on the son and the problem of evil, in the form of anger, revenge, and retaliation, reappeared. Here we see that Noah serves as an ancient and abiding example from religious literature of problems caused by overindulgence in alcohol. As Jung would maintain, it also represents an important psychological message coming not from a
psychology classroom or textbook but from religious literature. While this is clearly not an example of addiction, without question the decision-making capability of Noah’s ego was temporarily impaired by overindulgence in wine.

**Social Costs of Addiction**

It is not possible to accurately assess the percentage of industrial, community, or personal losses caused by addiction. A significant but unidentifiable portion of the cost and loss brought about by drug and alcohol abuse or misuse is not necessarily caused by individuals who meet the definition of addiction. Many problems and costs are caused by first time users, or by long time users who are not addicts. The primary difference between the problem user and the addict is that the problem user’s ego loses control of the decision making process temporarily, while addiction takes complete and constant control of the ego and becomes the most important aspect of the addict’s life. The addict develops a pathological relationship to the addiction that becomes more important than family, job, and even life.

The costs of alcohol and chemical addiction and abuse are staggering, but a significant portion of these losses are hidden in psychiatric and medical care, loss of production, loss of hope, suicide, accidents where alcohol and drugs are unrecognized contributing factors, and the suffering of family members, friends, and coworkers. As one example, Jungian analyst Lionel Corbett (2007) notes that in many cases one of the parents of a psychopathic individual was an alcoholic. As a child, Adolph Hitler was regularly beaten by his alcoholic father (Schoen, p. 54), which may have impacted his later actions. Research by Shelley Taylor (2004) has demonstrated that children from dysfunctional families, including those with parents who abuse drugs or alcohol, are at an
enhanced risk for a broad array of emotional and behavioral problems, health problems, depressive episodes and suicide attempts. Building on Taylor’s work, Repetti, Taylor, and Seeman (2002) have shown that children from such families are also likely to engage in drug or alcohol abuse as adults.

The following statistics addresses some – but certainly not all – of the costs and consequences from alcohol and chemical overindulgence and addiction. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health:

- substance use in the workplace negatively affects U.S. industry through lost productivity, workplace accidents and injuries, employee absenteeism, low morale and increased illness. The loss to U.S. companies due to employees’ alcohol and drug use and related problems is estimated at billions of dollars a year (2007).

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a majority of those who abuse drugs are employed. “Of the 17.2 million illicit drug users aged 18 or older in 2005, 12.9 million (74.8 percent) were employed either full or part time.” More tragically, additional research indicates “that between 10 and 20 percent of the nation's workers who die on the job test positive for alcohol or other drugs” (“Workplace substance abuse”).

Elliot & Shelley (2005) report that:

- 47% of industrial injuries and 40% of workplace deaths were linked to alcohol consumption. Almost 14 million Americans use illegal drugs; as workers, they are
3.6 times more likely to be involved in an accident at work and 5 times more likely to file for workers' compensation benefits than nonusers (Nighswonger, 2000). In 2002, nearly 15 million adults had alcohol-related problems (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2002), ranging from missing a day of work to serious accidents, and approximately 100,000 American lives are lost each year to the effects of alcohol use, either through diseases or accidents.

A report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights addressing substance abuse states that:

The social and economic costs of substance abuse in America are staggering. In a report issued in 1998 by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and the National Institute on Drug Abuse, it is estimated that the cost of alcohol and drug abuse for 1995 was $276.4 billion, of which $166.5 billion was for alcohol abuse and $109.8 billion was for drug abuse (“Sharing the dream,” 2000).

Addiction Treatment Issues

A major problem when attempting to reduce the problems described through these statistics and to identify a viable treatment for addicts and individuals who abuse alcohol and drugs is that individuals must first self-identify and admit they are confronted with a problem that is beyond their control. As John Sanford emphasized in his Jungian analysis of Stevenson’s novella, one of Jekyll’s major failures lay in his inability or refusal to accept his responsibility for the evil that resulted from his attempt to split the good and evil aspects of his nature. The addict, as defined in this manuscript, resists acknowledging
or taking responsibility for the problem and often refuses to seek or accept treatment, sometimes to the point of death.

In the words of the *Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book*, addiction is “cunning, baffling, and powerful” (Carnes, 1989, p. 238). The 12-step program developed and successfully utilized by AA has been adopted and modified for use in most addiction treatment programs. Treatment success rates for 12-step programs are not as high as desired and the programs have detractors among health care professionals. However, at the present time 12-step programs represent the most successful approaches to treatment, as long as addicts accept responsibility for their addiction, admit they are powerless to overcome it alone, and consistently follow the 12-step approach.

The first of the twelve steps in these programs is the addict’s acknowledgment that his or her life has been taken over by the addiction and he or she has lost control. This reflects the Jungian interpretation of addiction as loss of “normal ego functioning, thoughts, emotions, perceptions, motivations, judgments, decisions, actions, and behaviors” to the power of the addiction (Schoen, 2009, p. 3). Jung believed that true recovery could only come through a spiritual or religious experience in which the power of the addiction is replaced by a greater power; Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs are based on this concept (W., 1961). Given the Jungian view that the ego provides the decision-making aspect of consciousness, it becomes clear that the collapse of the normal ego creates a situation in which it is extremely difficult, sometimes impossible, for the individual to acknowledge his or her loss of control and accept the need for assistance in overcoming addiction. Understanding this approach may help
managers, human resource professionals, family members, and friends accept addiction as a real phenomenon that can and must be addressed.
References


