

To be sane and effectively integrated, the human psyche must organize everything into a seamless single system - the self. Self-knowledge perceiving everything human to be a normal part of psychic evolution is the only perspective capable of offering this opportunity.

Secular Homilies: Archetypal Visions

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SECULAR HOMILIES

Archetypal Visions

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Thinking & Feeling—Squabbling Siblings

Human nature is comprised of a large brain that wants the Big Picture always to be visible, while a feeling animal wants the now to be safe and significant ... no matter what the Big Picture says or does.

This still unresolved dilemma, in which feeling and thinking compete for dominance far more than they cooperate, is why the human species remains unstable in some basic ways. Like, for instance, that we have never learned to stop being violent. Indeed, staunch thinkers and furious feelers wage war over who can see more of the truth.

Interestingly in the last 100 years we have learned a good deal about these two psychic talents. We now know that emotion instantly and automatically defines everything in our experience before the mind even begins thinking about it. So instead of being at the head of the line, thinking is at the tail end, in effect the last

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to know anything. Feeling, intuition, sensation, etc. are already in the loop before the mind starts to work on what's happened.

Wrack one point up for the feelers, which strongly suggests that we cannot, as objectivity has always tried to pretend, think entirely rationally within an emotional context—which seems to be most, if not all of the time. Feeling is always out-front in our reactions to experience.

Objectivity tried to stop us from doing what feeling had been doing for centuries—anthropomorphizing. Apparently it can't be done. Whatever we're looking at we're a part of what we're seeing. Subjectivity is already occurring before the mind gets very far. Therefore it must have a useful purpose for happening this way ... unless we want to argue with God or evolution.

Objectivity has for some time now, in the name of science, pursued the holy grail

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of certain knowledge, what we call “facts”. When information needs always to be *relative*—impermanent—simply to acknowledge the possibility and presence of change. In spite of our knowing this, in the service of our need for a sense of safety, we institutionalize knowledge, making it ritual instead of permanent ongoing discovery.

And yet, on the other hand, we’ve also learned a lot about emotion. Instead of being the highest human achievement, feelings are, as beautiful as they can sometimes be, very much like children. They believe almost entirely in first, and often fleeting impressions. And they’re most often prone to move instantly from impulse into action, preventing thinking from intervening or exploring whether first impressions remain, or even really are accurate. Emotions impatiently demand instant gratification. When like children they require listening and understanding, rather than obedience or mollification.

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Serious feelers regard this spontaneity of reaction to first impressions as the prime virtue of emotion, on the spurious assumption that anything too much thought-about—premeditated—is dishonest and deceitful, expressing a very prejudiced opinion about thinking. Indeed some serious feelers mistrust thinking altogether.

Though at the same time feelers have good reason for at least some of their harsh thoughts about thinking. What they most resent, and justifiably so, is that thinking, in the name of science, has taken *control* of the whole spiritual shebang. Thought has ascended the throne of dominance that *control* implies, in the process demoting feeling to an inferior female position, that is until very recently.

When, as any good psychotherapist or historian could tell us, thinking has failed miserably in controlling anything. In spite of centuries of rationalism ruling the roost, the world in many ways is still a terrible

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mess. Reason by itself doesn't solve anything in real experience, except perhaps very tiny problems one at a time in the processes of what we call engineering technology results. We must all admit that thinking, with the help of various mathematical languages, has invented some pretty nifty gizmos.

Truth is that thinking is, by nature, not a controlling instrument. It's a mapping one. Thinking's enormous talent is that it can imagine anything being possible, thereby being open to, accessible to new ideas. Thinking is a speculative, anticipatory part of the human psyche that is capable of organizing information into a matrix of meaning ... then to imagine changing it all around again.

Thus ideas should be called "afterthoughts", because that's when they happen. We experience, intuit, sense, feel and begin to respond in that order, before thinking even knows what's happening.

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What *controls* human experience is habit. As the philosopher David Hume and others since put it, “causation is habit”. Freud verified this maxim, at least with a few of his patients, by altering the attitudes and unexamined assumptions that insert these habits into our behavior. Though we don’t often think of our everyday experience in this way—that hidden internal forces determine much of what we think we are consciously controlling.

What’s more the mind isn’t the only part of our psyche that thinks. Feelings think too. Though we usually don’t pay the slightest attention to the attitudes, impressions, predictions and solutions our emotions project into our mind, all of which are the thoughts emotion creates to influence us. But instead of examining these ideas for meaning and validity, as we normally do in a thinking mode, we launch instantly into doing something about it.

In giving the thoughts feelings produce such dominance in our emotional

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experience we give the heart a *rightness* that it deserves only partially. Within the matrix of psychic talents, emotion is the great verifier of truth. It feels what-rings-true. But there is a huge difference—hopefully a large gap—between what’s true and what we need to *do* about it. In matters that produce emotional response ... feeling, thinking, and acting become one simultaneous, impetuous and impulsive move, which is why we remain so prone to violence, particularly the emotional variety. Which in turn is why intimacy is so difficult. This bad habit of giving anger the management of our disappointment quickly escalates conflict beyond anyone’s tolerance.

Most fundamentally thinking isn’t about feelings, words or ideas. It’s about *sense*. As Sherlock has been trying to tell us in every one of his cases, *sense* is a consistency event, not an idea one. In other words, how do all the pieces fit together as a whole? Single ideas, no

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matter how clever, are a dime a dozen. To contain any meaning of useful significance, ideas must cooperate with each other to form a matrix of sense that organizes a great deal of information. What we call ecosystem is such a cooperative gathering of elements, the whole of which is usually very difficult to conceptualize, for instance like the how and why of the constantly changing patterns of the weather.

Emotional contributions to meaning identify and reveal our personal connection and attitudes about what we're trying to understand. Not, as objectivity wants, so that we can remove or sever them from our deliberations, but to find their our appropriate, constructive place in the scheme of things.

Gather all the emotional responses of a single person, and we have produced a template of their character, which is predictive of their behavior. This works very much like mathematics such as algebra and geometry. Math is far less

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about counting, and far more about offering predictive templates that describe the many ways that the pieces of physical reality interrelate with each other. That's what those long equations on the blackboard are all about. Likewise an emotional map of a person's life experience defines the talents, vulnerabilities and the most likely pitfalls of that individual's nature.

In all learning *structure* is the mother of reality. It represents the god-presence that we so ardently wish to be hanging around—namely a sense that all is in order. This is true in both physical and in human reality, whether we have set it up, in our life, or in society, in useful constructive ways, or in harmful self-punishing ways. Human structure can be of either variety.

Like all the rest of us, staunch thinkers and ferocious feelers have a lot to learn. Psychotherapy has provided over 100 years of a beginning to self-learning. Though it's efforts are still bogged down in the

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misguided illusion that what we're studying is "pathology". Instead we're investigating the good and bad aspects of human nature as it evolves through history. Some of our traits are beautiful, some ugly, and a few even deadly—all of which define our peculiar species-identity. That process of deeply understanding human nature has hardly begun.



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