

Lecture: Marginalization (abstract)

by Ursula Hohler

Definitions of marginalization:

- Etymological: from „marginalia“/comments at the margins of codices.
- Sociological: since the 1960's, research on marginalized groups.
- Mythological: from Fairy Tale/Grimm „Little Briar-Rose“.

Where marginalization happens:

- At the edge of „consensus reality“: people who do not share a group's agreed definition of reality, or don't correspond to it, get marginalized.
- Where the „conscious identity“ ends: the parts we are not momentarily identified with get marginalized.

Dynamics and psychological aspects of marginalization:

- Marginalization is a process and a phenomenon which necessarily happens when our identity forms and reality gets defined.
- In order to feel safe, we need a good grounding in a continuity of ego and in a shared world view.
- For individuals, as well as for groups, there will be times, when their established identity has to be widened, or even crossed, to enable adaptation to new situations and growth.

Marginalization and Jungian Psychology:

- The term „marginalization“ is not found in classical Jungian literature.
- Jung himself often described feeling „marginalized“ among his colleagues and in the academic world.
- The Jungian concept of individuation is based on the work around the „edge of the known world“ and is therefore closely connected to marginalization.

Why introduce a new term and concept?

1. The term „marginalization“ is more phenomenological and less judgmental than for instance „shadow“, „complex“ or „inferior function“.
2. The concept implicitly assumes that there are two parts and stimulates study of and reflection of their relationship.
3. Jung saw that a new psychology would be needed in the age of Aquarius and that this would mean more focus on groups and the interconnectedness of the field. For the work with „big bodies“ marginalization is a helpful concept.
4. Including this concept in our work could also support links between the fields of psychology, sociology and politics.

The effects of marginalization:

- Being marginalized is mostly a painful and traumatizing experience, which excludes you in many respects: your experiences are not valued and you often have no right/opportunity to speak out and be heard. This situation can cause despair, altered states, serious illness, chronic exhaustion and a suicidal state of mind as well as a burning wish for revenge.

- Being on the marginalizing side can lead to a state of being cut off from growth and new inspiration and result in a feeling of low energy, standstill and a chronic mild depression. This situation can cause serious illness and a suicidal state of mind as well as aggressive behavior out of frustration and boredom.
- Both parts (marginalized and marginalizing) may feel cut off from something, miss something, become one-sided and lack wholeness.
- Individuals, groups and societies depend from time to time on their marginalized parts in order to grow.
- Inner and outer marginalized parts need an opportunity to be seen, to define themselves and to be heard and acknowledged for their experience of reality.

The dynamics of marginalization as a process:

- Those who are marginalized today will probably marginalize others tomorrow. To see marginalization as a process and not mainly as a polarization of two opponents could be a step towards integration into the unifying field in the background, where diversity can be lived.

Work with individuals:

- when working with clients who have experience of marginalization or have to live with inner figures that marginalize them, it is crucial to enable them to become visible and to express themselves.
- the effects of the work on growth and transformation of clients with personal experience of marginalization is important for the whole society. They bring a special treasure to the world and contribute to the „general raising of consciousness“ (Jung, MDR, p. 343)

Work with groups:

- **Difference between psychology and social activism in groupwork:**
As psychologists, our goal is not primarily future action, but to create the necessary conditions for the group to share the whole spectrum of experiences, stories and realities present in the diversity of its members. Working like this encourages all levels of consciousness to come in and welcomes whatever happens in the moment. We include also the unconscious material in the background, as we do when working with individuals (see also Arnold Mindells „Deep Democracy“).
- The sustainability of groupwork does not mainly depend on the cuteness of the facilitators, but on their ability to pick up what is present in the moment. Especially the marginalized people or parts can help a group to become more real/to get in touch with its essence when they are supported to bring in their reactions and feelings.

Questions about marginalization for inner work and research

- **When you think of your childhood: Was a part of you marginalized in your family? According to which value system did this happen?**
- **Do you remember a saying/proverb/song which you heard often as a child? Is there any connection with marginalization?**
- **Do you remember your first childhood friend? looking back: do you think that marginalization was an issue? if so how?**
- **Does your childhood dream have any connection with marginalization?**
- **If you think of your favorite childhood fairy tale/TV-show/book, does marginalization play a role there?**

- **Do you remember an early experience of being marginalized outside of your family system? How did you experience this?**
- **Do you remember when you first realized that marginalization happens in the world around you? How did you react?**

- **Which parts of yourself do you tend to marginalize today?**
- **Do you support those parts to live? What challenges do you face when trying to do so?**

- **Which marginalized groups are you a part of? How did/do you experience this marginalization? What was/is your inner and outer reaction to the situation?**

- **What are your associations when you think of marginalization as an issue in your relationships?**
- **What are your associations when you think of marginalization in your professional life?**
- **Which parts of yourself do you marginalize when you are among colleagues like in this congress?**

- **Where have you been in contact with marginalized groups? What happened?**
- **Have you ever been afraid of a marginalized group? How did/do you deal with your fear?**
- **Have you ever admired/been inspired by a marginalized group? Have you been able to pick up something of what inspired you?**
- **Do you work with marginalized groups?**
- **When you donate money – does it go to marginalized groups or people?**

- **Are there questions you miss?
(Please let me know about them!)**

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Recommended reading

Goodbread, J., Living on the Edge: The Mythical, Spiritual and Philosophical Roots of Social Marginality, Nova Science Publishers, Inc, New York (2009)

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Mc Guire/Hull ed, C.G. Jung Speaking, Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series (1977)

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