

Stomping the Shadow: The *Elevation* of Snowboarding to the Olympic Pedestal from a Jungian Perspective

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The water of life, wishing to make itself known on the face of the earth, bubbled up in an artesian well and flowed without effort or limit. People came to drink of the magic water and were nourished by it, since it was so clean and pure and invigorating. But human kind was not content to leave things in this Edenic state. Gradually, they began to fence the well, charge admission, claim ownership of the property around it, make elaborate laws as to who could come to the well, put locks on the gates. Soon the well was the property of the powerful and the elite. The water was angry and offended; it stopped flowing and began to bubble up in another place. The people who owned the property around the first well were so engrossed in their power systems and ownership that they did not notice that the water had vanished. They continued selling the nonexistent water, and few people noticed that the true power was gone. But some dissatisfied people searched with great courage and found the new artesian well. Soon that well was under the control of the property owners, and the same fate overtook it. The spring took itself to yet another place—and this has been going on throughout recorded history.

~Robert A. Johnson, *Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche*, vii-viii.

After a while, the roots are buried too deeply. The message loses its shine, or is crushed by a big pile of money. . . . The riders' voice has been resonating from the inside for years. The message. The gospel. The word. Keep it real kids. Stick to what you believe in. . . . If we don't take control, who will? Look beyond what you see to what's underneath and make your decision.

~C. Adair, "Inside Out: Two Snowboard Companies Emerge from Canadian Soil," *Snowboard Canada Business* (Spring 2003), 90.

Snowboarding was inserted into the Olympic portfolio at the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympic Games. What is exceptional about this particular sport is that the push for

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the sport's Olympic association did not derive from the snowboarders themselves, but from outside that group, through the Fédération Internationale du Ski (FIS) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Over the course of many years, these formal organizations manipulated and bullied their way into controlling the competitive realm of snowboarding, even though the sub-cultural interests of snowboarding actively resisted all that competitive sports espoused. Once snowboarders arrived on Nagano's Olympic stage, the riders' perceived rebellious actions inspired both an intrigue by media and fans, and serious consternation by FIS and IOC officials. The IOC's punishment and resultant humiliation of Canadian snowboarder and gold-medal winner Ross Rebagliati is the prime example of how the IOC called forth a sport culture (snowboarding) into its purview, albeit through tactics of domination, and then scrutinized and castigated the culture's actions whenever those actors revealed and reveled in their own institutionalized behaviors.

The primary purpose of this article is to apply a Jungian or analytical psychology framework, primarily that of the *shadow complex*, to unveil some of the unseen forces at work during the integration of the sport of snowboarding into the Olympic fold. It is our contention that there are a myriad of unrecognized, even repressed forces at work beneath the 'arenas' of sport, forces that shape and control how sport is played and how specific sports—snowboarding, in this case—are integrated, perhaps engulfed into mainstream sport. We will provide a brief introduction to the tenets and major concepts of analytical psychology, at least those that we are incorporating in this analysis. Then we will juxtapose the key elements, events, interactions, and proceedings leading up to snowboarding's entrance into the Olympic Games in 1998 by using the Jungian shadow concept. And finally, we will focus on the Ross Rebagliati example as the showcase illustration of how such a shadow element inherent in the Olympic leviathan controls creates, and recreates, its agenda on the norms and expected behaviors of sports as they are brought into the realm of the Olympic Games. Using a Jungian framework to explain sport behavior is a relatively rare phenomenon,¹ yet an important and revealing methodological framework in examining the often unrecognized and unacknowledged underbelly of sport. It is our contention that these psychological forces and factors are powerful and insidious.

Jungian Psychological Concepts

Academe has not welcomed the doctrines of Jungian psychology. For example, Jungian psychology is associated with mysticism; New Age nuances; popular culture; public popularity; "antiscientific" postulates (such as that of the *collective unconscious*); Lamarckian notions of the inheritance of acquired characteristics (with specific respect to the concept of *archetypes*); a preoccupation with alchemy; and Jung's split with Freud which in itself cast considerable skepticism about Jung's theories.² At the same time, there have been some very important scholarly works—some of them related to sport—that have used Jungian psychology as a framework for analysis.³ It is not possible or fair to the complexity of analytical psychology to pretend to encapsulate its creed in a very brief manner. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the major concepts that have informed our thinking about some of the psychological forces that we believe are resplendent relative to the purpose of this article.