

THE SHADOW

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In Jung's model of the psyche, there are various personified structures that interact with one another in our inner world. Two of these, the *persona* and the *anima/animus*, are relational; the *persona* relates to the external world, and the *anima/animus* to the internal world. The *ego*, which is primarily body-based and may be understood as the executive part of the personality, stands alongside the *shadow*, and these two are to do with our identity.

Problems with not recognising the shadow

Jung had a deep interest in the *shadow* – its form and content – and in the process of assimilating “the thing a person has no wish to be” [CW16, para 470]. He saw quite clearly that failure to recognise, acknowledge and deal with shadow elements is often the root of problems between individuals and within groups and organisations; it is also what fuels prejudice between minority groups or countries and can spark off anything between an interpersonal row and a major war. This is perhaps why the General Index to his collected works contains over two pages of references to the *shadow*. Becoming familiar with the *shadow* is an essential part of the therapeutic relationship, of individuation and of becoming more rounded, more whole and more colourful.

The shadow and identity

Complementary to Jung's idea of the *persona*, which is “what oneself as well as others thinks one is” [CW9 para 221], the “*shadow* is that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors...If it has been believed hitherto that the human shadow was the source of evil, it can now be ascertained on closer investigation that the unconscious man, that is his *shadow* does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses etc “ [CW9{ii} paras 422 & 423].

The shadow's potential

What needs to be emphasised very strongly here is that the *shadow* contains all sorts of qualities, capacities and potential, which if not recognised and owned, maintain a state of impoverishment in the personality and deprive the person of sources of energy and bridges of connectedness with others. For example, a person might believe that to be assertive is to be selfish; so he goes through life being pushed around by others and deep down seething with resentment, which in turn makes him feel guilty. In this case, his potential for assertiveness and his resentment both form part of his *shadow*. Analysis might challenge his value system, track it back to its origins, help him to become more embodied and thereby more in touch with his needs, and open up areas of choice, which would probably lead to his resentment diminishing.

Personal and collective aspects of the shadow

It may be helpful to think of the *shadow* in a vertical way. At the top is the *personal shadow* – it may feel rather black, formless and underdeveloped as well as unwanted and disowned. But, as we have seen, whilst it may feel like a cess-pit it can also be a treasure trove. Below this, but not divided from it in any way, is the *collective shadow*. This, like the *personal shadow*, is relative in that it will be in part culturally determined. It consists of that which opposes our conscious, shared and collective values. For example, female circumcision is acceptable in some cultures; and abhorrent to members of other cultural groups. Something like paedophilia, however, is a transgression of a taboo, which seems to be universally upheld.

The shadow and evil

That leads us to the deepest areas of the shadow, where we find manifestations of evil as a dynamic in the world to which we need to relate with collective guilt, responsibility and reparation: privatised water, the arms trade, famine, torture, Guantanamo Bay etc; each of us will have such a list. The problem of evil is one that Jung explored through his correspondence with the Dominican, Fr Victor White, and through his writings, particularly “Answer to Job”. It is a huge topic which is beyond the scope of this introduction.

The shadow and projection

How is the *shadow* encountered? Almost always in *projection* onto some other individual/family/group etc. This means that I see in an other something I do not like; this tends to keep happening. I may begin to notice that a lot of other people are rather greedy, for example. And I may begin to feel censorious or judgmental about their greed. But, with luck, it may dawn on me that, what I am disliking in others is actually something with which I struggle within myself. These projections can be onto external others or onto internal dream figures; or both.

What are some of the disowned aspects of the psychosomatic unity that we call a person? The body is a good place to begin. Its form is problematic for some people, who do not feel physically joined-up; others dislike or hate their shape and go to dire lengths to change it; others feel quite disembodied. The contents of the body attract negative projections, which can then be parcelled out to others, whom we describe as “shitty/snotty/bloody” etc. Then there are sexuality and sex and their accompanying anxieties and pressures.

In terms of human development, once infants can experience, enjoy and live in their bodies, they can then learn, with their mother’s help, how to translate sensations into affects. For example, “butterflies” in the stomach can mean “I am nervous/feeling shy/afraid of that authority figure etc”. This is gradually how we construct an emotional vocabulary, and how we learn to accept a wide range of feelings alongside the capacity to think about them. But many people who seek therapy come with a whole number of emotions locked behind a defensive wall of armouring, which prevents closeness with themselves and others, true

intimacy and conflict. Positive and negative feelings are projected onto those around them, and with the projection goes the capacity to think clearly about situations and relationships.

The influence of others on the shadow

Why has this happened? From infancy and through childhood and adolescence we pick up from our parents/carers both conscious and unconscious messages about what is acceptable in terms of our body, our feelings and our behaviour. All that is unacceptable is suppressed and repressed and becomes part of our *shadow*. We not only take in and repress what is unacceptable, we also internalise our carers' attitudes to these unwanted qualities and characteristics of ourselves. The harsher the attitude, which may have been expressed by withdrawal of love, rejection, physical/emotional/sexual abuse, the more hostile we are to these facets of our *shadow*. At worst, the *shadow* becomes inextricably entwined with abandonment anxiety so that its emergence can really feel like a matter of life or death. Again, though, it is necessary to emphasise that positive, loving feelings and impulses can become as much part of the *shadow* as negative hostile ones.

Jung's experience

In 'Memories, Dreams, Reflections', Jung recounts a dream, in which he and a "brown-skinned savage" killed Siegfried. In telling the dream, Jung describes some of the feelings associated with encountering and assimilating the *shadow*: fear, disgust, remorse and guilt, compassion, grief and humility. It is an awesome list and it denotes the power of the *shadow*, its capacity to possess us ("He is not himself today"), even overwhelm us. But it omits shame; we all tend to feel ashamed of our *shadow*, some cripplingly so.

In the early chapters of his autobiography, Jung makes frequent reference to his mother's use of shame as a means of discipline. But neither Freud nor Jung paid much attention to shame, although they both suffered greatly from its effects. Perhaps this deficit in their writings was due in part to neither of them being analysed. For the shadow to emerge without overcoming the ego with the toxic effects of shame, we each need a different relational and psychological environment; analysis, psychotherapy, counselling – all of these offer such an environment in different ways. The therapist offers consistent positive regard, expressed in part through a commitment to reliability, continuity and the wish to share his/her understanding of the patient's inner and outer world with the patient. This is part of gaining insight, finding meaning, taking action (in terms of reality testing, for example) and enduring the outcome for the time being. The patient begins to trust the therapist; and this trust deepens when *shadow* elements of the patient come into the therapeutic relationship, where they are accepted with compassion and attempts at understanding. If all goes well enough, they are not subjected yet again to disapproval, shaming or rejection, and the energy which is locked within them is released. For example, the depressed person who manages to contact and become familiar with suppressed rage becomes enlivened and energetic.

Assimilating the shadow

This process, the assimilation of the *shadow*, leads to self-acceptance and self-forgiveness. Grievance and blame give way to the taking of responsibility and attempts at sorting-out what belongs to whom. A fierce conscience, which tends to be self- and other-punitive can relax, and personal values can be set in counterpoint to collective morality.

The therapist's shadow

The therapist also has a *shadow*, a theme which has been explored by Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig, who alerts us to the dangers inherent in the possible perversion of the archetypal image of the Wounded-Healer. Such a perversion can take place when, for a variety of reasons, the therapist splits the therapeutic pair into 'healed therapist' and 'wounded patient', thereby extracting the healing potential from within the patient, who is then caught in a passive, infantilised and dependent position. Such splitting can lead to all sorts of transgressions of the therapeutic boundary, which are always the responsibility of the therapist because of, amongst other factors, the power of the transference. These need to be dealt with in further analysis+supervision.

The trickster

From mythology it is the character of the Trickster "...a collective shadow figure, a summation of all the inferior traits of character in individuals" [CW9{I} para 484], whom Jung thought could save us from 'hubris' and free the conscious mind from its fascination with evil. The trickster is usually thought of as atrocious, unconscious and unrelated, but someone who can nonetheless transform the meaningless into the meaningful. Often encountered at cross-roads, s/he is always moving, duplicitous, sexually rampant and a joker. The trickster is best portrayed, perhaps, by the figure of Hermes, who gave Pandora ('the all-gifted one') audacity and cunning.

In Western culture it is the wolf that brings us close to the world of *shadow* at its more animalistic level. De Vries (1984) cites the archetypal qualities of the wolf: untamed nature, fertility, lust, cruelty, murderousness, avarice; "...the diabolical, melancholic hungry" that can take possession of more humane characteristics.

Jung's shadow

It is now generally thought that Jung left those interested in his ideas and their development some of his own *shadow* elements to deal with: his anti-Semitism, his negative connotation of the animus, his obscure writing, his idealisation of the East etc. He never wanted there to be any "Jungians", but it is interesting to note that so many Jungian organisations have been subject to splitting, to ossification of rigid defences and massive projection! But, as Stacey has suggested, it is in the shadowlands of organisations that so much creativity finds breathing space.