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Good and Evil and Jung's Concept of the Shadow.

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Jung saw the basis of our human consciousness as a striving to come to terms with the opposites and the fictive goal, aim or meaning as getting in touch with the experience of what he called the Self as the coincidentia oppositorum, the "meeting of the opposites".

It is also very much in line with Jung's attempts to understand the psyche, if we try to explore it's archetypal background as expressed in mythological forms. And in connection to our theme it may be appropriate to literally go back to Adam and Eve. It is our Jewish-Christian myth, the story of Paradise and its loss which gives an account of how the opposites of Good and Evil became part of human knowledge and human experience.

Paradise, commonly used to designate the Old Testament's Garden of Eden. The idea of a condition of bliss is thus expressed in the image of an enclosed garden full of plants, trees and animals. Symbolically this image may be expressed in terms of security or containment--as shown in the enclosed space), in benevolent nature (think of the trees) and also with instinctual-animal needs being gratified without conflicts see the animals). Thus in this Garden everything was pleasing there was harmony between man and beast and God provided lovingly for mankind's well being. It is interesting that such imagery about a primal, blissful existence of humans is widespread and is found also amongst archaic peoples such as the Australian aborigines, the Eskimos etc. and was also commonplace among the great urban cultures of the ancient Orient.

In other words: the characteristics of humanity in the paradisial state Are almost universally enumerated as: immortality, spontaneity freedom. The possibility of easily ascending to Heaven and meeting with the gods, friendship

with the animals and knowing their language. Immortality signifies no polarity between life and death, none of the much-lamented problems characteristic of life in the flow of time, with its dynamism of death and becoming. There is neither reproduction nor separation. Moreover there is no conflict between humans and the gods.

But Paradise has been lost due to a guilty action of the first human pair Adam and Eve. It should be noted that the motif of loss of the state of Paradise is not unique to our Jewish/Christian creation myth. Many African stories also tell of how a mistake or a violation of a commandment results in a momentous loss. The Greeks also saw their own Golden Age as having been lost due to human fault, namely due to hubris, that means pride or presumption. This is a word they used to describe human behaviour that oversteps limits set by a divine order of being. We find a classical example of hubris in the myth of Prometheus's theft of the fire. Here humans take divine privilege into their own hands. According to our biblical story, Adam has committed this same transgression and God says: "Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil". (Gen. 3.22).

The capacity to distinguish between the opposites is at the very root of human consciousness.-- indeed it defines human nature. Paradoxically this capacity is both an offense against God's creation and an opportunity given by god. Because, after all, it was God, the all knowing himself who set the treacherous serpent in the all beautiful, all perfect Garden of Eden. And it is of course this serpent who plants the seed of doubt in mankind's ear. In Christian tradition God's opponent is known as the Devil. And Devil is derived from the Latin *Diabolus*. That in turn developed from the Greek verb *diaballein*, which literally means "to through into confusion" and was understood to connote "to create enmity, to slander or insult". Interestingly the English word "double" is etymologically related to the Old German word for "doubt". In brief then, "to doubt " connotes "to fall into two parts" or to "fall out of an initial unity".

The serpent thus symbolizes, among other things, human nature's inherent potentiality for doubting, for calling things into question. The serpent thus "poisons" the satisfaction of a complacent harmony, of being one with some sort of order, whether external nor internal. It represents a deep-seated human instinct to eventually cast doubt on the validity of articles of faith and recognized value systems. In any religious or political autocratic system, it always is the doubt which is evil. But from the standpoint of life's ongoing flux calling things into question is positive and necessary, doubts may give rise to new orientation.

The myth of paradise portrays an essential paradox in the growth of human consciousness. From the perspective of God, the humans have become "like one of us, knowing good and evil". This knowledge produces a degree of "godlikeness" within the human. From the human perspective however, it is this very growth of consciousness which brings man to recognize his limitations, his "nakedness" before God. No longer does one enjoy blissful ignorance of the painful conflicts caused by polarisation of good and evil, but also of inner and outer, subject and object, ego and self. Consciousness centred in the ego is based on the differentiation of these opposites. And the suffering of their polarity.

Thus good and evil are basic opposites. The question arises of course, what are the contents that are considered as being good and which are the ones that are considered as evil. The fall from paradise is caused by the so called primary sin. But even this "primary sin" is interpreted in ambiguous ways. Yes, for sure, evil and guilt is within us. But the primary sin can also be seen as the "felix culpa", a meaningful even fortunate guilt., because without it the coming of Christ, the redeemer would have been superfluous. The paradise myth says that after they had eaten the fruit from the tree of knowledge, the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened. And at that moment Paradise is forfeited. This means that the paradisaical state cannot be consciously perceived and realized as such. The question thus arises: is consciousness and its growth good or evil? In any case

we have to admit that it is not only a blessing. Of course, on the one side it is surely a high achievement of nature and evolution. But to what extent do the products of human consciousness interfere in a destructive way with nature? This is one of the most pressing problems of our time.

In any case: what is good and what evil is one of the most inexhaustible questions. Jung was very concerned about it and deals with it in several of his writings. (E.g. Answer to Job, Aion etc.). In summary I would like to say the following: Any society needs a value-system for its functioning and its survival. This serves as a means of orientation for its individual members. The human being is a "Zoon Politikon" (Aristotle), a political, society forming being and always lives in an organised group. The community has to function, and this functioning is based on regulating taboos, customs and religious rites, later on laws and rules. They always are the outcome of a particular world-view and its hierarchy of values. In archaic tribes or early cultures these taboos and customs originated from a divine authority, a superhuman power at least. Take for instance the ten commandments of the old Testament. These commandments are given by God and set a standard of ethical behaviour. If the individual lives according to these standards, he or she lives in accordance with the will of God but also with the general value standard of his community.

Now the general value hierarchies may differ from society to society, but also in the course of history. What some societies consider good others consider evil. For instance, in certain archaic tribes a young man had to present three skulls to his fiancée as a wedding gift. It was considered good that he had killed at least three people outside from his tribe. Only that made him to be a real man. It meant that he had incorporated the life energy of his victims by devouring them. But, to give an example on another plan: such highly ethical philosophers as Plato and Aristotle did not consider the institution of slavery to be evil, as we would today. They just spoke of the need to treat slaves in a humane way. That was ethical enough. In the Middle Ages, the burning of witches was often

felt largely as a good and necessary deed. Evil had to be burned, and in this way the witches were purified for the Beyond.. Here I want to quote Jung who says: (Two essays, vol7, pg. 74) "It is of course a fundamental mistake to imagine that when we see the non-value in a value or the untruth in a truth, the value to the truth ceases to exist. It has only become relative. Everything human is relative because everything rests on an inner polarity". I think this is a most important insight. Every principle which we tend to render absolut shows sooner or later its shadow face.

Christian teaching is considered as a religion of love. It is of high standard, if you can forgive or even love your enemies. Jesus sets a famous example for this love when at the cross he prays for his executioners: Father forgive them for they know not what they do. (Luke 23/24).: But the New Testament-concept of the enemy is complicated by the belief that God himself has an enemy, and it usually does not seem that he loves him very much. Thus we read in a letter from St, John: "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil". Now, a good Christian should love his enemy. But what about the devil, the enemy of God?

To fight the devil in the name of God served as a rationale for the darkest chapters in Christian history, as mentioned already. We have to think of the inquisition, the persecution of heretics, and all the religious wars up to our time. As soon the enemy can be considered as devilish, he can be hated, persecuted and killed with good Christian conscience. May be this is an important reason, why the command of "love your enemies" has had so little impact in history. To declare something as the "work of the devil" is very much a question of estimation, as we cannot know for sure, what the will of God is and what the seduction of the devil. Ethical evaluations by necessity change in the course of history. Inquisition for instance, which to a great extent was done in good face (at least consciously) seems to us rather as having been motivated by a devilish and sadistic lust for power. We would not necessarily subscribe today that "the

mind which is set on the flesh is hostile to God, as said St. Paul. (Romans 8/7) This attitude is partly responsible for sex repression and hypocrisy, which in turn was an unconscious motivation for something as devilish as burning of so-called witches--at least that is the way we see it today, especially after Freud's discoveries of the pathological effect of sex-repression.

The distinction between God and the devil is a delicate business. As soon we think that this distinction is clear-cut and self-evident, the devil joyfully rubs his hands behind our backs. He always did and does so behind any clear-cut doctrine and often well-meant world view with its value-hierarchy. Thus it necessarily gets devalued as evil from the standpoint of the established order. And this with good reason, as the dragon of chaos lurks behind any disintegration of value order. We have today the so often deplored crisis of values and the decay of authorities. And this gives cause to great insecurity, anxiety and also a sense of meaninglessness. The consequences can take quite destructive forms like flight into substitute ideologies, and or a fanatical clinging to a religious or political doctrine, Fundamentalism in so many forms has grown enormously. But next to the most destructive consequences of this situation one observes also profound attempts to meet this challenge, to examine the fundamentals of human condition and to search for new insights and individual solutions towards finding some meaning. Also Jung's discovery of the process of individuation is a serious attempt in this direction. Jung had the most important insight in seeing that the work of maturation of the personality cannot aim at attaining Perfection. He made the important distinction between **Perfection** and **Wholeness** or **Totality**. (Jung, Aion S. 78 ffr. 1951/76). The archetypal idea of the goal of the individuation process manifests itself as wholeness in the sense of totality. And wholeness always includes the shadow of imperfection. Perfection cannot tolerate shadow, as the very existence of shadow abolishes perfection. It therefore is an impossibility for humans to attain perfection. The more we strive for it the more we encounter opposite tendencies

within ourselves. It was already St. Paul who said: I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do". (Roman, 7, 19). For these tendencies within us Jung created the term "Shadow". It seems that St. Paul was at least partly aware of these shadow aspects within him, in contrast to all of us who may not be aware and instead project their shadow aspects onto other people. In such cases Jung has spoken of shadow-projection. "Shadow" thus has become since Jung a general psychological term. Jung understood it as representing those tendencies in the personality which the conscious ego is unwilling or unable to acknowledge and accept as part of itself. He writes: "The living form needs deep shadow if it is to appear plastic. Without shadow it remains a two-dimensional phantom". (Jung .C.W. 7, pp. 238-239). It seems to me that Jung's choice of the term "shadow" is a most felicitous one. In nature, shadow is created by light; where there is light, there is shadow as well. Light is also the symbol of the brightness of consciousness--which makes it graphically clear that illumination by consciousness always casts a shadow at the same time. Thus the specific form, content and effect of the shadow is largely determined by those value-attitudes with which the ego identifies itself.

Another reason why I find the choice of the term shadow appropriate is because we generally understand the idea of "the dark" to include not only that which is morally inferior but also things unclear, unilluminated, still unconscious. And so we cannot simply equate shadow with that which is absolutely negative or evil. It is only the "negative" of the image we harbor about the world and about ourselves. And that image is largely linked to the experiences of early childhood, to our upbringing and the collective values of our society, all of which greatly determine our personal development.

The shadow, then, is the "so-called-evil" in a given situation; but, as depth psychology has discovered, it can have extremely destructive effects, particularly through splitting off from the conscious, responsible personality.

Jung says: "Everyone carries a shadow , and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is". (CW. Vol. 11, p. 78).

The danger of shadow contents, as long they are repressed or split off from consciousness, stems in part from the fact that they generally manifest themselves as projections onto other people. Traits and tendencies which we unconsciously reject in ourselves irritate us terribly in other people around us. As an example I am thinking here of a young man who had a vast anger against the so called "establishment". His aggressivity brought him into repeated difficulty and he suffered from not gaining the recognition he felt he deserved. He saw himself as too much a lover of truth, with too much integrity to be successful in this society, since, according to him, all success requires a person to somehow prostitute himself. As a result he hated anyone who was in any way successful. Now he had a very relevant dream to this subject. He dreamed that he encountered a very successful person whom, in reality he hated and despised above all others. This successful ,am showed an interest in the dreamer, however, and tried to become his friend, whereupon the dreamer felt himself flattered and eagerly accepted the offered friendship..

The successful man in the dream embodied the dreamer's vast ambition, his longing to be recognized by society and to play a significant role in it. But such a drive for prestige does not fit the ego-ideal of a "man of integrity", who regards all striving for success as a prostitution and thus as "shadowy". The repression of his need for success had its price, however, namely hatred. He himself termed his feelings of hatred "justified anger", although his attitude repeatedly angered others and sabotages his own inner need for love, admiration and recognition. He finally had to admit that the need to succeed was very active in him and that he wanted nothing so much as to become one of these successful people he had so vehemently condemned. He was forced to take a conscious attitude towards his own ambition, so that he could harness it

responsibly for constructive ends. This made him more tolerant towards others and toward himself--certainly a gain in moral stature.

Most hostility is based on such processes by which other people are made to carry the projections of our own shadows. The consequences are social as well as psychological, and all too familiar. Just think f.i. of the persecution of racial minorities with its atrocities, etc. Similarly countless interpersonal problems derive from projective mechanisms, and are as harmful to our own psychic health as to the objects of our animosities. Negatively judged aspects of one's personality are thus not to be suppressed or repressed, but rather drawn into the realm of responsible consciousness, which admittedly is often a much more difficult undertaking. But experience repeatedly shows that openness towards those sides of one's own personality that are felt to be inferior or immoral can provide the impetus for valuable changes in attitude, greater maturity and a heightened sense of responsibility.

The shadow is there, whether we wish to take account of it or not. It is inherent in all humans and serves to bring the ego back down to earth when it threatens to float off in an inflation. Knowledge of the shadow's existence helps counteract illusory blind faith in "progress" both with respect to humanity in general and ourselves in particular. From the standpoint of some "absolute good", everything we do is questionable and tinged with shadow. There is f. i. the example of modern medicine, which has made enormous progress and aims at something ethically unassailable (unangreifbar), the healing of the individual and the prolongation of human life. But as welcome as it is, medical progress has its shadow side, of which the so called "population explosion" is just one example. Thus we are confronted with the fact that our very laudable medical progress is at the same time highly problematical and casts its shadow. So we cannot avoid but include knowledge of the shadow side in every decision; otherwise we fall prey to utopian illusions and project our own shadow onto those people who do not share the same illusions.

Such projection occurs whenever there is missionary zeal for a good cause or an idea which is regarded as ideal or absolutely good. For example, the concept of a completely just social order is something essentially positive, certainly worth striving for. But when it is overvalued, when any and all means are deemed justified to achieve that aim, perhaps via "revolution" or even war, then what becomes split off from consciousness is the realisation that there has never been a society providing fullest justice for every individual, that because of its complexity all human social organisation has a shadow component. Those who do not share the illusion that the new social order will be perfectly just are labelled "reactionaries" who stand in the way of its realization and thus become the new carriers of shadow projections.

At the same time, the knowledge that everything we do is tinged with shadow does not mean that that we must simply fold our hands and cease striving for any sort of progress. There is always the danger that this knowledge may paralyze initiative and lead to a kind of pseudo-wise fatalism. It may be thought that no effort for improvement is sensible, since it is all contaminated by shadow. There may be said as an answer that creation and change are a psychic necessity of our human existence. Were we actually able to get rid of the shadow once and for all, there would be no more impulse to create, to improve and change, may be we would have the illusion to live in paradisiacal perfection.

It is then always worth keeping in mind that, in psychological terms, original sin comes very close to what we understand by Shadow. Jung seems to have had a similar idea in mind when he wrote:

"We know of course that without sin there is no repentance and without repentance no redeeming grace, also that without original sin the redemption of the world could never have come about; but we assiduously avoid investigating whether in this very power of evil God might not have laced some special purpose which it is most important for us to know. One often feels driven to

some such view, when, like the psychotherapist, one has to deal with people who are confronted with their blackest shadow." (6)

Hence, when I unquestioningly fight against, suppress or repress that which I perceive as evil, I neglect the fundamentally human function of inquiry. I fail to ask what purpose or meaning could be contained in that so called evil. I do not look it squarely in the eye, in order to assimilate it into my orientation toward myself and the world. Therefore I remain insufficiently aware of what I am doing. Sometimes, as a result, I unconsciously do evil in the name of doing good. I love my neighbor and do not notice how my undue concern tyrannizes him. I speak the unvarnished truth to people around me and remain oblivious to the "subjectivity" of that truth and to my own arrogant tactlessness and lack of understanding for the experience of others. With the best intentions I am helpful to others, but I fail to observe how much I thereby want to make them gratefully dependent upon me in order to increase my own self-esteem. I fight for a just society and since I am convinced that what I am fighting for is "good" I am prepared to employ any means to achieve that end.

The shadow is always present, even with the best intentions, and it is extremely important to admit that fact to oneself. The contents of the shadow are part of the variegated kaleidoscope of human behavior and imagination. It is perfectly human to harbor incestuous wishes, perverse fantasies, utopian dreams overweening ambitions, aggressive death wishes towards those who stand in our way.. One need not be ashamed of such things in oneself and try to repress them, since they are part of being human. They often rise into consciousness unbidden, autonomously. When we find the courage to look them into the eye they and inquire as to their sense and meaning, they often take on a difference valence. Their meaning is likely to become clear when we try to understand them not only concretely but mainly symbolically. Then it frequently turns out that they symbolize inner tendencies which are potentially constructive to our process of Individuation.

It is possible to develop a new attitude towards our most ignoble fantasies and to draw them into the circle of our conscious sense of responsibility. This makes us aware of the variety and profundity of human existence. In this way we also feel ourselves to be more human in the fullest sense of the term and less concerned about always saving face. When I come to know my own shadow, to include it in my conscious attitude I am no longer so susceptible to the judgments of others around me, less bothered by the fear of being seen through and thus devalued.

To sum up: There is no denying that the shadow inherent in everything human creates immeasurable problems. An avoidance of these problems leads to neurotic constriction or to projection of the shadow onto the outside world and resulting blindness. Acceptance of one's own shadow is often very painful and requires great moral courage. The benefits it may bring are greater tolerance, modesty, genuineness and increased differentiation of judgement, thanks to which simplistic black and white are seen to be merely two facets of an almost endless spectrum. The life of the psyche is profoundly diverse.

I want to end my talk by two quotations from Jung which express the complexity and also the relativity of the shadow concept. In "Psychology and Religion" Jung writes: " If the repressed tendencies, the shadow as I call them, were obviously evil, there would be no problem whatever. But the shadow is merely somewhat inferior, primitive, unadapted, and awkward, not wholly bad. It even contains childish or primitive qualities, which would in a way vitalize and embellish human existence, but--convention forbids."(CW 11, § 134). Here Jung talks of the shadow merely as those sides in us we may feel ashamed of and cannot accept because of their unconventionality. Yet he also says in Psychology and Alchemy: " Evil needs to be pondered just as much as good, for good and evil are ultimately nothing but ideal extensions and abstractions of doing, and both belong to the chiaroscuro of life. In the last resort there is no

good that cannot produce evil and no evil that cannot produce good". (CW 12, § 36).