

## The Inner Shadow and the Hidden Wholeness.

By the Emotional Freedom Service of St Jeanne Antide Foundation

### Am I projecting my shadow on onto you?

Hello! Are you afraid of your own shadow, or do you dare look at it? The inner shadow consists of those parts of my self that I don't know about or ignore or hate or see as negative or ugly or unacceptable. In the shadow could also be some strong emotions that when I was young my parents or society did not find acceptable for me, so this made me "hide" them in a dark internal place. For example, the courage to take initiatives, anger, or a sense of vulnerability.

Because my self looks for security and for that reason expects itself to be strong and beautiful, my self does not particularly like facing its own shadow. So, what does it do? It throws or projects its shadow on other individuals: a partner, a relative, an acquaintance, or some public figure. It even projects onto groups: such as those of the other gender, refugees, etc. To psychologists all this is known as projection. Very often, my conscious mind is not aware that I am doing this, perhaps other people discover this about me before I do!

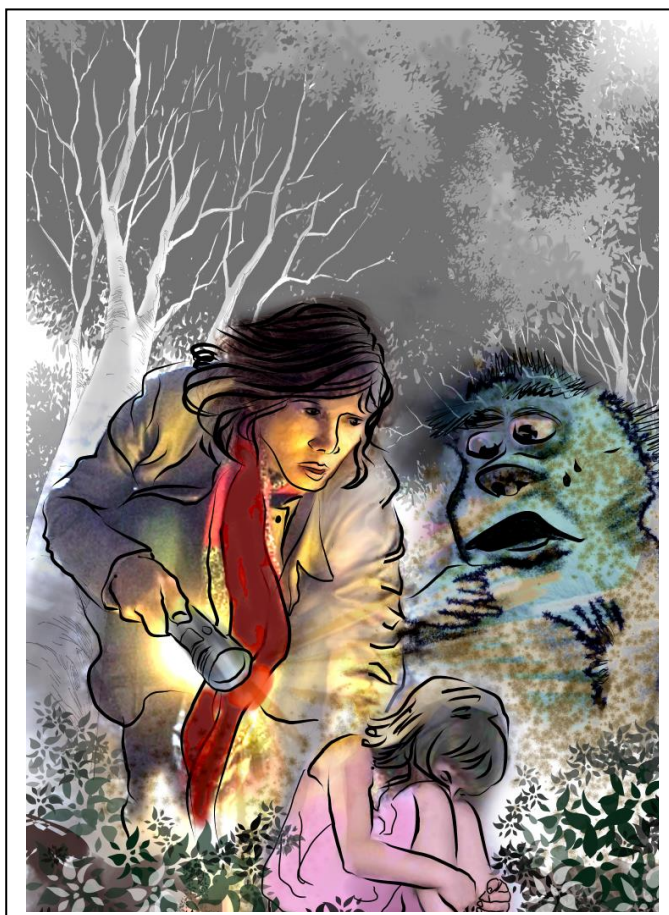
If you are a Christian, I suppose you know what Jesus said about projection <sup>3</sup> "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? (...) <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5)

Everyone has a shadow, and if you don't do anything about it, it will prefer to remain hidden or ignored and projected upon someone else.

In literature and in films, facing one's own shadow is portrayed as a meeting with your demons, a visit to the underworld, or the killing of dragons or monsters (is that why your nephew gets lost in those games on his computer?), etc. These, and other metaphors, show that when you come face-to-face with that which lives in the darkness, you will experience pain and fear.

So what are we supposed to do with the shadow? We need to face it and make it our own, so that it will become conscious and we will move towards wholeness. You need to make sure that you see the shadow, and to admit that it's there and make sure that it doesn't carry you away, and you even should see what good things the shadow can offer you.

Until you face your own shadow, you will not be whole, and you will not know yourself. Perhaps your relationships will not be satisfactory, because you will be short of



humility and you will keep throwing your waste onto someone else. Perhaps you will be intolerant or prejudiced against whoever is different. Your spiritual life probably will not have started moving towards maturity, because that anything in you that is not known will be impeding you from getting close to that which is divine in you. On the other hand, when you become aware of your shadow, you will realise that *with all your imperfections*, like the lost and found lamb, you are loved, with a universal love and without conditions.

With all your imperfections? For everyone and especially for those who have the anxious condition of perfectionism and are Christian, this is a very

important point! But didn't Jesus command us to "be perfect"? If we are perfect we are not human. Let's not blame Jesus. The word "perfect" in the original Greek Gospels (*teleioi*) does not mean perfection, exactly, but rather completeness, fulfilment of my nature, wholeness. This we can see also from the context:

*But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, (...) Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)*

He seems to be saying that when you discover and admit your hidden imperfections, which you are projecting onto others, you become a person who, like God, has compassion and love for everyone. The spirituality of human beings is a spirituality of imperfection, but it is also one of unconditional love and universal compassion. Do Christians *really* follow Jesus? (Shhh! – "judge not!" he said.)

Warning: the remainder of this article is only for those who have some love and respect for themselves. If you disdain or hate yourself,

seek help, and don't work by yourself on your shadow until you get better, because otherwise your burden will become heavier.

## How do I become aware of my shadow?

Make a note in your mind, or on paper, every time you discover in yourself the following tendencies. Warning: "to take note" means "become aware and remember," - it doesn't mean "grasp and wrench away"! When you become aware of them, the best mental state is one of a quiet curiosity that does not

judge yourself or the shadow sides of your personality that you are finding.

Take note whenever you find yourself trying to win

against someone else. Your shadow is convincing itself that it is "on top." It prefers this to seeing the other person doing well and enjoying themselves. Take note also, whenever you are being severe and unyielding with someone - either your peers or those to whom you are a leader, supervisor, or parent. Take note whenever you are criticising or strongly condemning someone. Often, it is your shadow that you are seeing in the other, and it's your shadow that is speaking. It fears differences because these evoke its own weakness or insecurity about itself.

Notice also whenever you find yourself obsessed with saving everyone from their own defects, defects that you have seen in them, while resisting seeing yourself with the same critical view. Your shadow would be, in fact, trying to save itself - but, as long as it remains in the darkness, unknown, it doesn't know how.

Notice whenever you meet someone to whom you take an instant dislike. Ask yourself whether it's possible that you are projecting your shadow onto that person. And detect

what kind of shadow item it is. Take note also whenever you are putting on the victim mentality. Your shadow is then convinced that it has something missing, and it's blaming someone else - a particular person or just any person. Notice your preferences and prejudices. Note the resistance that you feel when you try to understand your ignored or hidden tendencies and to see where they are coming from.

Do you have any other buttons, that, when pressed by someone else, evoke in you strange or strong reactions?

### And what do I do with this shadow?

Whenever you discover part of your own shadow, direct a current of forgiveness and compassion towards yourself, especially towards the inner place of your weaknesses. These are the parts of you that most in need of being loved. After noticing that you are projecting your shadow onto someone, direct a current of compassion towards them.

Slowly, aspects or elements that had been in the shadow become part of your conscious self. So then there is no longer a need for projecting them onto someone else, pretending that they are not in you. Some of these elements you continue to be aware of, while deciding that it is not right to let them come out in your behaviour. Other elements you might decide to use directly in your life. For example, if in your shadow there has been an excessive sensitivity, this, when it is seen and "owned", becomes less exaggerated, and becomes a resource to help you understand and help someone else.

Whenever you become aware of the tendencies that we have mentioned, these become more conscious. While you are becoming aware of your shadow, or your tendencies that live in darkness, progress is already taking place, because this means that now there is light in that darkness, a new light from the conscious mind on them. In such a

manner, your internal life can rapidly or slowly heal itself and move on its natural journey towards wholeness.

But there is a wider wholeness: universal, spiritual. A hidden wholeness that human beings approach in their spiritual path or pilgrimage. Besides the light of your conscious mind, there is another light, the light of God. In the words of Rumi "*The wound is the place where the light enters you.*" On this quote, a blogger wrote, "I have never seen this quote before this morning, and it has frozen me at my kitchen counter, still in my Sunday pyjamas, suddenly transformed internally - feeling like the spirit of God has washed over me in waves of love as I reread the quote over and over again."