

Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche Study Guide

**Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark
Side of the Psyche by Robert A. Johnson**

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Plot Summary

"Owning Your Own Shadow" by Robert A. Johnson is a work in which the author lays out the Jungian theory of the shadow and brings new clarity to this subject. The persona is the image that the individual wants to present to the world. The persona is largely based on the material that is stored in the ego. The ego absorbs data that is positive and nurturing for the individual. The ego protects the personality and stores only that material, which will put the individual in the best light.

The shadow is the receptacle for those thought patterns and behaviors, which society has deemed unacceptable. The personality is largely unaware of the shadow and does not readily recognize it. However, the shadow does not go away and neither does the data stored in it. As more and more unacceptable information is pushed into the shadow, the larger and more powerful the shadow becomes.

Conflicts naturally develop between the ego and the shadow when the dark side grows in strength just from the sheer size of the data stored. Civilization has taught man to ignore his dark thoughts and view them as evil and sinful or work of the devil. However, this so-called darkness is part of us and denying it does not make it go away. It ultimately must be dealt with. An individual cannot be complete without the recognition of all elements of his personality. And, this recognition must lead to a balance between the two sides.

The ideal state resides on the fulcrum, that space or gap that exists between ego and shadow. In that neutral position, the personality has the ability to assess all aspects of its makeup. Sheer genius is not possible without tapping into the shadow and benefiting from the buried treasures that exist there. It is religion that bridges that gap. The term religion in this work refers to its original meaning which is described as a "healing" and "bonding" entity.

Having a real and constant connection with one's shadow will eventually lead to paradox, which is an existence in which an individual has a cognitive relationship with the ego and the shadow. This individual exists in a new reality in which both sides have equanimity and in which he makes no judgment against either force. A seemingly contradictory sentiment that it is bad to lose and also good to lose is embraced by one who has reached paradox.

The mandorla is the almond-shaped center of two intersecting circles. It symbolizes healing and unity and is used to strengthen one in a paradoxical state. The mandorla represents transformation and rebirth and departs from the mundane duality of normal existence. As man perfects his paradoxical state and the two circles of the mandorla become one of the highest order of existence and one that is the closest to God.



Chapter 1: The Shadow

The persona is what each of us would like to be and how we wish to be seen in the world. This persona mediates between our true selves and our environment. It presents an image and sends a message to the world just as our clothing does. The ego is what we know about ourselves. The shadow is that part of ourselves that we are unaware of.

Although we are born "pure," as we develop good and evil are defined for us. This is when the shadow-making begins. We begin to shape our image by separating what's socially acceptable about ourselves and what is not. The shadow gains strength from the accumulation of all those discarded characteristics. The shadow has energy, almost equal to that of the ego. It can erupt in an overpowering rage which seems to come from nowhere. The shadow, when out of control, can cause depression or even accidents. Civilization is the entity which cleans individuals and society of those negative behaviors. Although we are born with both so-called "evil" and "good" aspects, society forces us to abandon half of that which is part of our nature. Forcing children to abandon this very natural part of themselves can rob them of their childhood.

Culture is a man-made structure. Observing different cultures from around the world, it is apparent that the behaviors affixed to ego and shadow vary. In the West, individuality is lauded while in Middle Eastern countries, it is a sin. As the world grows smaller through technology, these differences represent the potential for great conflict. The shadow in one culture is trouble in another. It is safe to say that not all characteristics found in the shadow are bad. Some of our most powerful characteristics may be locked up and lying dormant in the shadow.

All humans arrive into adulthood with a defined ego-shadow system of good and bad and right and wrong. Religion attempts to restore the whole person. Christianity attempts to redeem man from the sins of the Garden of Evil. Most people get caught up in life and being human—gaining skills, becoming educated, working and raising a family. The other part of our existence deals with restoring that divided, broken person that our psyche reminds us on a subliminal level still exists.

Balancing Culture and Shadow

No characteristic is ever destroyed. Characteristics are either allowed to remain visible or they are moved to the hidden shadow region. If one is to maintain equilibrium, there must be balance between the two. This balance can be disrupted if one side or the other is too heavily loaded. The mind can breakdown and experience psychosis. Just like the body balances its temperature and other functions, the psyche has a natural drive to maintain balance.

It is a false concept to think that a "good" person is one without characteristics that are generally defined as evil. Such a weighted imbalance would be unstable and wreck havoc with the psyche. While we learn to show the good side to the world, we must learn to recognize the so-called "bad" side that each of us has and not attempt to hide it



from ourselves. The same laws that rule nature, rule the psyche. All nature lives in balance: light and dark; creation and destruction; up and down; and, male and female.

The Swedish psychiatrist Carl Jung was raised under severe discipline forcing him to ignore his dark side and first became aware of his shadow in a nightmare. Jung concluded that the ego and the shadow came from exactly the same point of origin and served to balance each other. Light follows dark and one cannot exist without the other. The place of true sainthood is the fulcrum, the healthy balanced middle. Balance can only be accomplished by recognizing one's shadow. There are familiar images of the mad scientist and the difficult artist. They are individuals who have learned to tap into the dark side. Genius is not possible without the strength of both. Narrow creativity summons up a narrow slice of shadow while broader talents tap more deeply into the shadow. With great talent comes great suffering. The composer Schumann went mad, the dark side of the artist Picasso is common knowledge. Jung would often greet friends by asking, "Had any terrible successes lately?" (20) which was a recognition of the individual's dark side.

In this blessed century of technological advancements, the danger of a bored and lonely shadow looms from the idle time made possible by these advancements. To avoid the danger of an unbalanced psyche in these modern times, due attention must be paid to the shadow in an intelligent and proactive way. How can we live within the rules of society and at the same time meet the needs of the shadow? The unconscious cannot detect a difference between real and symbolic. Acknowledging one's anger privately after an unpleasant encounter with another will symbolically satisfy the shadow. This is a necessary step because the anger that wounded the dark side will rear its ugly head eventually and not especially at the most opportune moment. The shadow must not be ignored or it will cause an outburst, a breakdown or depression. A writer whose dark side has been injured can write that pain in words that no one else will ever see but it will go a long way to calm the shadow.

The traditional Catholic Mass has all the elements of the dark side but balances it with the hope for redemption. Unfortunately, the modern mass has been "cleaned" so that it is more appealing to the cafeteria Catholic. The generic term "catholic" means to be complete. The physical cross represents the framework of balancing left and right and high and low. By ignoring the dark side and allowing assaults against it to accumulate, it makes one vulnerable to psychosomatic illness, black moods and accidents. In the West, we all battle against a society that honors the light side making it difficult and unpopular to laud the advantages of the dark side and speak truthfully and intelligently about them.

We are living in a society that has ignored its dark side which has resulted in war, economic decline and intolerance. Germany, a highly civilized nation, cast its voracious dark shadow on the Jewish people. There was but a brief period of euphoria after the Cold War ended. The Gulf War was waged pitting dark shadow against dark shadow. Conflicts can erupt when the dark side of a culture has been ignored for months or years or even decades.



The Shadow in Projection

Unless there is conscious work on the left-side or shadow part of our psyche, it will eventually project its fury in some capacity. In Medieval Times, the dark sides of two warring kingdoms were allowed to battle with each other without the limitations of modern civilization. In today's world, the dark side is dealt with in a different way. The fantasy of the movies, fashion and novels provide receptacles for our shadows. The dark side is fed by a steady stream of crime and mayhem reported in the daily news. These are all forms of projection and we are left with less-than-complete personalities when we invest our darkness in something outside of ourselves.

Evidence of the projection of darkness is everywhere: man upon woman; Catholic upon Protestant; Muslim upon Hindu - the list goes on. The criminal is the scapegoat for society's shadow just as the black sheep is for the darkness of a family. The term bogey man came from a strange ritual in old India. A man was chosen in each community to be the "bogey." He was slaughtered at the end of the year and took all the evil deeds of the community with him. The bogey man was treated like a king for the year before his death because the people were grateful that their evil would be atoned for.

The most egregious projection of a shadow is that from parent to child. In this assault, the child's own ego-shadow balance is distorted. It is conventional wisdom that an abused child will often grow up to abuse his own children. Perhaps the reason for this cycle lies in the imbalance between the light and dark sides. The only way to refuse someone else's shadow projection is to not react, ignore it and not succumb to it. There is no winner when one person projects his shadow onto another person. The person receiving the shadow is thrown into imbalance and the projector is losing part of himself. The projection of a shadow can only be successfully carried by the recipient if he is healthy enough to prevent any distortion to his own psyche, if he is fully aware of what is occurring and is willing to temporarily support the the shadow until the projector is able to work things out.

The Gold in the Shadow

It is possible to project the very best of oneself from the shadow onto another person. Hero-worshiping resides in the shadow. A fourteen-year-old wants to be like a sixteen-year-old and when he becomes sixteen, he wants to be like the eighteen-year-old. The author, Robert A. Johnson, idolized Albert Schweitzer. As he matured, he realized that it was not satisfactory to his shadow to allow Schweitzer's achievements to retard his own. Jung said that it wasn't as difficult to get the skeletons out of the closet of a patient than it was to get the gold out of the patient's shadow. People are as frightened of their talents as they are of their dark sides which is why it is easier to hero-worship than to bare one's own talents and capacities to the world.

Much untapped energy exists in the shadow. If you can reach your shadow a great deal of energy will flow from it. A parrot will more easily learn profanity because of the emphasis his owner places on the words. The parrot doesn't know what the words mean but detects the energy with which they are voiced.



The Shadow in Middle Age

In middle age we become aware of the shadow and tire of the power struggle between shadow and ego. Once we find the fulcrum, we learn that it's a place of joy and where we belong. But it is only possible to stay there for a limited time. The book of Revelation describes the beauty of this balance. The Ancient Chinese called it Tao. It is the yin and the yang.

Early childhood is devoted to discipline. It is the time to prepare for adult life. A large shadow is created during this development period. By middle age, the development process is completed and much as been stuffed into the shadow. It is a dangerous time when great changes can be triggered - breaking-up of marriages, resigning from jobs, exploding at friends. It is the energy of the shadow bursting out. This energy can be channeled to the creation of a new and satisfying way of life. As counter-intuitive as it may seem, changing jobs in middle age can be an exhilarating and positive change and one that will please the shadow.

The Ceremonial World

There are ritualistic ways to reach and develop a relationship with the shadow. Suggested ways to achieve this connection are to write about it, draw it, sculpt it, burn something symbolically. The psyche does not know when an action is an outer or inner one. The creative act is a recognition of the whole of reality. Marie Antoinette grew bored with her ostentatious palace and her shallow existence. She decided she wanted to be a milkmaid. After elaborate barns were built for her and cows were brought in, she changed her mind. She had been heading in the right direction until she balked at the last minute. She was answering a call from her shadow. Instead of becoming a milkmaid and perhaps changing the history of France, she went on to be beheaded. Becoming a milkmaid was the "gold" in Marie Antoinette's shadow.



Chapter 2: Romantic Love As Shadow

The most powerful projection that one ever makes is the act of falling in love. In Jung's early usage of the term, the shadow was defined as anything that lay in the unconscious part of one's personality. To fall in love is to project the most valuable form of self upon another human being. In some cases, this high octane love can be projected on an art or profession. Falling in love is different than loving. It is bigger-than-life and over the top.

One projects the golden part of one's shadow when falling in love. But when this feeling is turned upside down or when love goes wrong, there is no feeling more bitter in the human experience. When one is in love, the object of affection seems holy and God-like. When the "in-love" person comes back down to earth, the loved one is, for the first time, seen as human and possessing all the potential flaws inherent in that reality. When going into a marriage, it is important to recognize the role that the shadows of each partner will eventually play.

Romantic love is a relatively recent concept in our history and with it the most sublime feeling man is capable of having. But when we fall in love we set ourselves up for the greatest suffering imaginable. Two myths that surfaced in the twelfth century are still part of our consciousness. Before these myths emerged, Western humanity honored the greatness of God in a collective manner. Tristan and Iseult provided one result of romantic love. The myth illustrates the downside of projecting our divinity upon another human. They abandoned custom and were swept into a situation that neither could sustain. They drank from a potion that was intended only for the king and queen and took on a divine power that was impossible for them to deal with. It's a parable of how the unrealistic state of being "in love" (not loving) cannot be sustained. Tristan and Iseult could only see God's light. Were they able to see the complete God - his true splendor with both the dark and light - their relationship would not have ended in disillusionment.

The story of Atlanta of Ancient Greece tells the story of a strong and intelligent woman who was also the fastest runner in the land. She declared she would only marry if someone could beat her in a race, which she knew was impossible. Hippomenes fell in love with her and asked the goddess Aphrodite to help him. She gave him three golden apples which he threw on the ground as they raced. Atlanta stopped to pick each one up and Hippomenes was able to take the lead and win the race and her hand in marriage. Aphrodite was angered with their ingratitude and turned them into lions. Their love was the result of a divine power projected onto them which doomed the relationship.

When we examine the shadow, we are entering into a realm that contains a very powerful aspect of our personality. The paradox of the shadow is that positive energy can be discovered in the dark and neglected part of us. This paradox is an acceptance of reality. It makes space for grace and mystery and creativity. Every human experience can be addressed in terms of paradox. Day is only understandable as it relates to night. Masculinity is defined by its comparison to femininity. In our paradoxical existence, we



must embrace both sides of the puzzle. The most sure way to break a person is to require him to follow two different value systems - our Sunday rules versus our Monday through Saturday rules. Dealing with these values for years, it is usually in mid-life that the pull from both sides becomes too much to bear.

The paradox that we attain is a paradox itself - while it is painful it propels us to new heights. It forces us out of our box and makes us destroy old and inadequate concepts. By mid-life, we have lived a life of conflicts but we, in most part out of sheer necessity to survive, felt we had no choice but to endure it. I have to go to work but I don't want to go. I need to lose weight but I like rich food. I detest my neighbor but I can't show it. Reaching paradox in mid-life can prepare the individual for enlightened years ahead.

The contradictions that people must wade through are constants in our lives. The secular side of society teaches us that success is measured by how much money we make. The religious part of society teaches us that it is better to give than to receive. How does the average person reconcile these and many other opposing views? Our Constitution is based on individual freedom and democracy. Our religious teaching lauds the virtue of subservience. Ironically, the contradiction between the secular and the spiritual elements of our culture can be found on a five-cent piece: "In God We Trust."

One problem in dealing the duality of life is that our culture uses the word "religious" in the wrong way. The word "religion" stems from the Latin root meaning again and from "ligare" which means to bind and bond. In our culture, religion has been represented as the answer while in reality it should be viewed as the bridge that binds two contradictory sides. Religion helps man move from a confused and conflicted existence to paradox in which both sides are embraced giving us a unity more powerful than either.

The opposition that one faces in life zaps one's energy. The successful transformation to paradox requires that both sides of an issue exist as equal values. Being aware of these internal conflicts and allowing them to co-exist will ultimately provide a solution as each side has something to teach the other. It is not a compromise; rather, it is an attainment in the depth of understanding. There is no set formula. Each situation has its own dynamics that must play out. Once a person has progressed past the duality of life, he has come to believe that he is doing the will of God. The miracle of paradox is achieving the ability to understand that it is both good to win and good to lose. Freedom is good but so is acceptance of authority. Paradox teaches us that there is divine truth in both the secular and the religious. Remaining in the state of paradox will provide the means to channel all our energy and fine focus on enlightenment.

The Paradox of Love and Power

One of the most troublesome opposites to reconcile is love and power. Both must be present in our lives. Most relationship problems center on struggles involving these two elements. A paradox of the love and power creates a union capable of enduring conflicts. Fanaticism is a an effort to push forward one side and hide the other. The



fanatic will cherry-pick evidence that supports his chosen side and ignore that which challenges or refutes it. The future of our culture depends on religion and its true meaning and purpose - to heal and to bridge the gap between opposing sides.

The Shadow as Entree to Paradox

How is paradox connected to the shadow? The answer is simple. There can be no paradox if one has not recognized his shadow. And, to own one's shadow is to prepare for the ultimate spiritual experience. The paradox between two conflicts is the holy place. People seek resolution for a collision of values but they should be seeking the ability to withstand the paradox. It is precisely in this paradox where one will grow. Heroism could be redefined as the ability to withstand paradox. At this point, the ego can do no more. It must wait for something greater than itself. The absurd statement, "Don't Just Do Something, Stand There," is not really absurd. We meet religion when we get to the point where we can proceed no further.



Chapter 3: The Mandorla

There is a concept to help us through this standoff and it can be found in our own Christian culture. The mandala is a holy circle that represents wholeness. It is an image of our connection to God and all living things. It is part of the religious cultures in Tibet and India. It sometimes is used as a symbol of healing in Christian art. The mandorla has a healing effect and is that almond shaped image that is created by the intersection of two circles. In fact, mandorla is the Italian word for almond. This almond-shaped center is representative of the overlapping of heaven and earth but also represents the two opposing sides within ourselves. The mandorla is found in the cathedrals of Europe.

As stated before, culture teaches us to prefer the good and push the bad aside. Those banished elements are what the shadow is comprised of. They typically stay hidden until mid-life when they re-emerge often bursting at the seams. This is where the mandorla comes in. It has a healing effect. When one is beset by the stress of life's struggle, the mandorla helps us transition from a cultural to a religious life. It binds together that which was ripped apart. It is the most profound of all religious experiences and represents what the word "religion" really means. One side is represented by a flower the other side by fire. The fire represents transformation and the flower rebirth. The promise of the mandorla is that the intersection of one's ego and one's shadow will provide relief from conflict and the confusion of life and lead to a brand new existence. T. S. Eliot wrote that that "The fire and the rose are one." Poetry is the music of the mandorla. It unites beauty and terror.

Mandorla is represented in all languages. However, well-structured sentences in any language that is used are required. Good talk is healing and restores unity to disruption and calm to chaos. There are certain phrases that are important to mandorla. The verb "to be" heals a break between two entities. The use of any verb provides comfort and restoration. A sentence is like a mathematical equation with the verb being the equal sign. The more verbs that a sentence has the more powerful it is. By talking to yourself, you can deal with a problem. Freud called it the "talking cure," more evidence that language has a healing power. In this process, a person may well debate with himself and by so doing, he will tap into both sides of his personality. All good stories are mandorlas in that they tell how opposites can overlap and two sides can merge into one.

When one is stalled into inaction over an issue or problem, God is present. Conflict without resolution is evidence of a direct connection with God. There is a poet in all of us. We can create our own mandorla. Perhaps it may be simplistic and not seem initially powerful but by using it everyday its potency will grow. When the two circles overlap to the extent that they become one circle, it has attained the Christian goal of unity between heaven and earth, between dark and light. Mandorlas can be created by other art forms including music, painting and even dance. A movement in Bach's St. Matthew Passion is an example of a musical mandorla.



In South American, there is a powerful form of the mandorla. The religious leaders are known as curanderos and are described as somewhere between a shaman and a Catholic priest. They hold mass on a large mesa. This altar is separated into three sections. The right might contain a statue of a saint and flowers; the left is dark and comprised of weapons. In the middle is the place of healing. The mandorla stands for peace and even the private mandorla of the individual can help to heal a society.

Many westerners are the in the destructive habit of feeling guilty. Guilt is a waste of energy and time and precludes an individual from creating positive energy from a mandorla. Having guilt is deciding that one side of an issue is correct and rejecting the other side as wrong or unworthy. It is throwing the chance for unity and paradox away. Christ himself is the ultimate mandorla as he is the intersection of man and God.

Every exchange between a man and woman is a mandorla. It is where masculinity and femininity connect. Every mandorla that is experienced by an individual is brief in duration. Then he must return to the world of duality. It is human nature to be divided over and again between our ego and our shadow. In order to achieve balance, we must connect with the shadow each day. By maintaining this practice, we prepare for the ultimate experience - the mandorla.



Important People

Carl Jung

Robert A. Johnson, author of "Owning Your Own Shadow," is a Jungian scholar and based this work on the "shadow" concept that was first conceived by Carl Jung, renowned Swedish psychiatrist. Quite naturally, there are many references in this work to Jung. One of the most relevant is how he came to discover and understand the "shadow."

Carl Jung developed the concept of the shadow after he unintentionally discovered the presence of "another" in his psyche. Jung had a paradoxical dream that both frightened and encouraged him. It was a nightmarish conflict between the light ahead of him as he walked through a fog and a mysterious looming dark figure following him. After he awoke, he knew that the light he was heading for was his consciousness, or ego, and that the dark figure was his other self, his shadow.

Jung had matured under rigid circumstances. He went from a strict upbringing by his devout Protestant parents to the rigors and severe discipline inherent in medical school. He had a very focused persona and until that nightmare, had ignored the dark side that was buried in another part of his psyche. After he began developing his theory on the shadow, it was his conclusion that the ego and the shadow originated from the same source and, when permitted to, served to balance each other. He was one of the first in psychiatry to understand that the personality cannot function properly without a balance between the two seemingly opposing sides and that the ego and shadow cannot exist one without the other.

God

"God" is mentioned quite often in "Owning Your Own Shadow." Author Robert A. Johnson connects the most perfect, or paradoxical state, that a human can attain as the closest relationship that man can have with God. If a man who has attained paradox remains patient and vigilant, an equanimity will occur between the ego and the shadow and it will be the presence of God who will unite the fragmented parts of the personality. The resolution between the two opposing sides, ego vs. shadow, will then occur naturally.

Johnson demonstrates the duality in which civilized nations live. On one hand, the secular part of culture tells us that every man has a right to freedom and independence while organized religion teaches us that it is good to be subservient to something bigger than self, i.e. God. While there is a separation of church and state first conceptualized by Thomas Jefferson that has become entrenched in our government and mindset, elected officials from the president to mayors of small towns are sworn in by the Bible and swear to God to fulfill their duties.



While our Judeo-Christian roots have taught us that money is the root of all evil, our very currency system has the phrase, "In God We Trust," and a one-eyed pyramid which could very well represent the unity of dark and light. There are endless conflicts within individuals and society at large on a much larger scale. There is confusion about the role of God in the life of man and in the life of a nation.

In the dark and neglected area of our psyche dubbed the shadow by Jung, are golden treasures buried and forgotten. One of them is the image of God that we call up at emotional times and use in misguided ways. For example, when a person falls in love, he often recovers the gold in his shadow and projects this perfect "God-like" image onto the object of his affection. But the person is not God however and will not stand up to time and scrutiny. The image is shed and both parties are disillusioned and hurt

Jesus Christ

The most obvious and perfect example of paradoxical man is Jesus Christ since he was both man and God.

Adam and Eve

Duality is the theme of a painting by Berthold entitled "Tree of Life and Death," Eve is depicted as picking fruit from the tree and handing it out to a long line of people for their damnation. The Virgin Mary is handing out fruit to people for their redemption. Adam is depicted as sleepy and unconcerned or unaware of what is occurring.

St. Augustine

In "The City of God," St. Augustine wrote, "To act is to sin." This sentiment supports the concept of paradox.

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva

Brahma is the Indian god of creation. Shiva is the Indian god of destruction. The god Vishnu sits in the middle keeping a balance between the two.

Johann von Goethe

Goethe reportedly was profoundly impacted when he confronted a vision of his doppelganger - the other self that lived in his personality. Goethe's Faust is the greatest literary example of the ego confronting the shadow.



Pablo Picasso

The dark side of the great artist Pablo Picasso is well-known. It was Jung's theory that true genius cannot be attained without tapping into the shadow.

George Bernard Shaw

George Bernard Shaw said that the only alternative to torture is art - we have to engage our creativity or pay the prices.

Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi said, "If you follow the old code of justice - an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth - you end up with a blind and toothless world." (Chapter 1, p. 37).



Objects/Places

The Persona

The persona is the image that each man wants to present to the world.

The Ego

The ego is the part of the personality that protects the individual and his persona. The ego selects only those elements that will place the individual in good light.

The Shadow

The Shadow is that part of the personality that is dark and neglected and even hidden. It is the receptacle of all those things that the individual has learned are evil and therefore has learned to hide them.

The Catholic Mass

The old or traditional Catholic Mass was the one religious ceremony that encompassed both the dark and the light and the good and the evil in its ceremony. However, in modern times the Catholic Mass has been pared down to be more acceptable to a broader range of people and no longer gives values to both natures of man.

The Cross

The fulcrum of the cross represents a balance between left and right and up and down. It is symbolic of the unity of man's psyche and recognition of his dark and light sides.

Medieval Times

During Medieval times, society was ruled by patriarchal values that were decidedly one-sided. In this era, the Church took part in shadow politics.

Tao

In ancient China, the middle place that honors both natures of man - dark and light - was referred to as the Tao which described the middle as a creative union rather than as compromise.

The Dollar Bill

The duality of our society - one consisting of both secular and religious forces - is symbolized in the dollar bill which contains the phrase "In God We Trust" although the nation was entrenched with the concept of separation of church and state.

Mandala

The Mandala is a holy circle that symbolizes wholeness. It is found in Indian and Tibetan cultures.

Mandorla

The Mandorla is the almond-shaped form that is created by the intersection of two separate circles. It symbolizes the uniting of two opposing sides.



Themes

Paradox

Man reaches his apex when he attains a state of paradox. In this state, man finds himself between his ego and dark side and has achieved a recognition recognizes the value and necessity of each. In this state, he is preparing and on his way to making the closest connection possible with God. In paradox, the concept that it is both good and bad to win is logical. The man in a paradoxical state allows both sides of a question to have equal value and voice. He does not favor one over the other. His patience in refraining from taking sides ultimately results in God's presence and a natural and effortless conclusion to any matter in which the dark and light are at odds.

With man in a paradoxical state, he is able to discover the benefits of the dark side - elements of his personality and nature that have been shoved aside and hidden for years. Positive energy flows from these pent up and neglected aspects of the psyche. The paradox will allow the individual to re-discover golden treasures that were buried long ago in the shadow. Every human event or experience can be described in terms of paradox. Femininity is only understandable when compared to masculinity. Night follows day and the comparison clarifies their impact. The paradox allows an individual to embrace all aspects of his natural-born personality and repair it and reunite it back to its natural, complete state.

There is a paradoxical element to the paradox itself. It is difficult and even painful to let go control of self and not fret and worry about resolving problems, but doing so propels man to new heights. Once man reaches paradox, which more commonly happens in mid-life, ahead of him are the promise of years of much enlightenment.

Religion

In order for an individual to attain his highest and most ideal state, his ego and his shadow must be united or rather reunited since everyone was born with an unbroken personality. The breaking of the personality and the creation of the ego and the shadow are the results of the maturation of the individual within the civilized world. From a young age, we are taught by parents and our culture which thoughts and behaviors are acceptable and which are not acceptable to society.

Religion is an integral part of the process that can unite the ego with the shadow. In this work, the term "religion" does not have the same meaning that is generally known in our society. The root word of "religion" is Latin and its meaning is closer to "binding" or "uniting" than it is to the concept of organized religion. When an individual begins to recognize his shadow and understand that he cannot ignore it and that it must be treated with the same value as the ego, he finds himself in the gap between the two



often opposing sides. Religion is the tool that is used to unite these two fragmented elements of a personality back into one, the way it was first created.

Johnson also speaks about the paradox and how the most euphoric and perfect state of man is his paradoxical state. In that state, it is when man is most closely connected to God. Although one could categorize this as a religious conclusion, in this work it is not considering the manner in which the term "religion" is defined in it. Johnson does make references to Christianity and other religions as they relate to the concepts in this work.

Johnson singles out the old Catholic Mass as the one ceremony in organized religion which had elements of both the dark and light side of man. However, much to his disappointment, the Catholic Mass has been modernized in order to maintain church attendance by today's cafeteria Catholics. He also notes that the word "catholic" means complete which is the most perfect state of the human personality.

Projection

There is a golden part of the shadow, a part of the personality which is generally thought of as dark and containing the nefarious thoughts and dreams that we want to shove away and not allow to be part of our persona. But that is a false view of the shadow because it is as much a part of an individual's personality as the ego is. In fact, true genius is not possible without tapping in to the shadow.

The golden part of the shadow is the treasure that is buried there in the darkness. It is the part of the psyche that elevates the individual to genius and to the depths of emotion impossible without it. When we "fall in love" it is as an act in and of itself. It is not "loving" - it is "falling in love." When in that unrealistic state, the individual who has fallen so hard digs deep into his shadow and brings out the golden symbol of perfection that exists there or that feeling of oneness that is only possible with God and projects that image onto his object of affection.

But projecting an image that is god-like onto another human is not fair and is doomed to disillusionment and ultimately to failure. The very human person cannot withstand the image that his be forced upon him. He or she is not perfect, is not god-like and will not stand up to scrutiny. When that fall comes and the image is shed, the person who was in love realizes that his amour was human all along and is flawed. The one who had the unfair image foisted upon him, is hurt and befuddled that he is no longer worshipped.

Style

Style

Perspective

"Owning Your Own Shadow" by Robert A. Johnson is written in the first-person narrative. Johnson is a Jungian scholar and lecturer. He is the ideal person to dive deep into the concept of man's shadow. It is obvious throughout the work that Johnson feels that exploring the shadow contributes to man's mental health and happiness. He therefore explains the concepts that are complex and unfamiliar to most in a clear way to allow for broad understanding. Johnson reinforces the knowledge he shares through repetition and example.

The concept of the personality's "shadow" was first developed by Carl Jung, famed Swiss psychiatrist. With Johnson's vast knowledge of Jung's works and teachings, Johnson is able to present a thorough and detailed account of the shadow's role in man's psyche.

Johnson is an accomplished author having written a number of other books including "He, Understanding Masculine Psychology" "She, Understanding Feminine Psychology" "Inner Work," "Ecstasy" and others. In "We, Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love," Johnson examines the romantic myth of Tristan and Iseult, a tale which he includes in "Owning Your Own Shadow." Johnson is an expert on Jungian theory and studied at the Jung Institute in Switzerland.

Tone

"Owning Your Own Shadow" by Robert A. Johnson is written in an authoritative and scholarly tone. Although, many of the concepts presented are complex and require deep reading to fully grasp, Johnson does a good job in describing and explaining what will be new material and concepts to many readers. The original idea of the shadow personality was conceptualized by famed Swedish psychiatrist Carl Jung. Johnson is a Jungian scholar and is intimately familiar with the doctor's concepts, ideology and teachings.

Johnson is not only an author of this work, he is also a teacher. He lays out the concept of the persona, the image an individual wants to present to the world; the ego the part of the personality that protects an individual; and, lastly the obscure shadow which is the part of our personality that is a receptacle for all those thoughts and behaviors that are not culturally acceptable, at least according to civilization.

Johnson teaches the reader about these elements of our personality and psyche and, though complex and difficult to understand, he very carefully repeats the description and purpose of each element and their interactions so that the reader becomes more and



more familiar with them as the work progresses. The learning process does not seem overwhelming because of the subtle, almost gentle touch, that Johnson uses to explain a process of the psyche, an area that is complicated and not well known among the general population.

Structure

"Owning Your Own Shadow" by Robert A. Johnson is separated into three lengthy chapters. Following an Introduction which briefly explains the premise of the work is Chapter 1, The Shadow. In this first chapter, Johnson explains the elements of personality. The persona is the image that man wants to present to society. The ego contains those behaviors and thought patterns that the individual has been taught to be socially acceptable. The shadow is a hidden part of man's personality in which is stored the banned and forbidden thoughts and behaviors that are culturally unacceptable.

In Chapter 2, Romantic Love as Shadow, the author describes how one copes with the most difficult issues that man faces - love and power. It explains how the projection of one's shadow upon his love object is a recipe for failure. In Chapter 3, The Mandorla, the author describes how man can get in touch with all elements of his personality and thus gain the optimum state, the state in which he will be closest to God.

There are several illustrations including a depiction of the Tree of Life and Death by Berthold which represents the fundamental elements that Johnson writes about. In the third chapter, photographs of the Mandorla at the Chalice Well in Somerset England and the Mandala, a Bhutanese wall painting, are included.



Quotes

"It [the shadow] is our psychological clothing and it mediates between our true selves and our environment just as our physical clothing presents and image to those we meet" (Chapter 1, p. 3).

"One can make a forceful argument that children should not be subjected to this division too soon or they will be robbed of childhood: they should be allowed to remain in the Garden of Eden until they are strong enough to stand the cultural process without being broken by it" (Chapter 1, p. 6).

"To create is to destroy at the same moment. We cannot make light without a corresponding darkness" (Chapter 1, p. 15).

"While those with the largest talent seems to suffer most, we all must be aware of how we use our creativity - and of the dark side that accompanies our gifts" (Chapter 1, p. 19).

"George Bernard Shaw said that the only alternative to torture is art. This means we will engage in our creativity (in the ceremonial or symbolic world) or have to face its alternative, brutality" (Chapter 1, p. 27).

"The ego is primarily engaged in its own defense and the furtherance of its own ambitions, Everything that interferes with it must be repressed. The repressed element become the shadow. Often these are basically positive qualities" (Chapter 1, p. 45).

"We must restore the word religious to its true meaning; then it will regain its healing power. To heal, to bond, to join, to bridge, to put back together again - there are our sacred faculties" (Chapter 2, p. 85).

"Isak Dinesen, the Danish author of Out of Africa, once wrote that there are three occasions for true happiness in human beings. The first is a surplus of energy. The second is the cessation of pain. The third is the absolute certainty that one is doing the will of God" (Chapter 2, p. 87).

"Take the roof off any human life and one will find the paradoxes that are the preparation for a religious life, a vision of that which is greater than the persona. Conflict to paradox to revelation: that is the divine progression" (Chapter 2, p. 91).

"Great poetry makes these leaps and unties the beauty and the terror of existence. It

has the ability to surprise and shock—to remind us that there are links between the things we have always thought of as opposites" (Chapter 3, p. 103).

"We are all poets and healers when we use language correctly. One makes a mandorla every time one says something that is true." (Chapter 3, p. 104).

"The I Ching, in hexagram #61, says, 'If a wise man abides in his room his thoughts are heard for more than a thousand miles'" (Chapter 3, p. 112).

Topics for Discussion

Explain what the ego, the shadow, and the persona are. What are the relationships between them?

Why is it important for man not to ignore his shadow? What purpose does the shadow have in our lives?

What does the projection of one's shadow upon another entail? Why is such projection a bad thing for both individuals involved?

What is true religion and how does Western civilization misuse the concept? What is the Latin root of the word "religion?"

Explain the contradictory nature of Western civilization as it relates to its secular and religious side. How does the dollar bill encapsulate the opposing sides of society?

What is paradox? Why is it ideal for an individual to reach paradox? Why is it both difficult to withstand and why is it the ultimate religious experience?

What is the mandala and what cultures can it be found in? What is the mandorla? How can they be created? Why is Jesus the highest form of a mandorla?