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PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

Shadows Along the Spiritual Pathway

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Abstract Contemporary spirituality discourses tend to assume that a canopy of light and love overarches all spiritual pathways. Unfortunately, the dark side of humanity cannot be spirited away so easily, and aberrations of personal spiritual development, interpersonal spiritual relationships and new spiritual movements can often be traced to the denial, repression and return of our dark side. Transpersonal psychology offers a way of approaching, reframing and redeeming the unconscious depths of our psyche, with its metaphors of shadows and daimons on the one hand, and its therapeutic practices for symbolically containing and transcending polarities on the other. In its absence, any spirituality which eulogises holistic growth is likely to engender the reverse effect.

Keywords Spirituality · Religion · Transpersonal psychology · Shadows · The daimonic · The demonic

Introduction

Spirituality is a contemporary notion which encompasses traditional religions whilst going beyond them. Religion is a collectivised and often institutionalised form of the spiritual life; its beliefs are rooted in sacred scriptures, the lives of prophets or the oral testimonies of ancestors; its rituals are intended to bring us closer to a real transcendent being, notably a Creator God; and there are designated intermediaries to facilitate worship (Koenig et al. 2001, pp. 17–18). In our postmodern era, there are proliferating spiritualities, which may dispense with scriptures, communities, Creator God or intermediaries, since their provenance often resides in an individualised attunement to the transcendent dimension of self,

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others and cosmos (Heron 1998, pp. 50–52). Spiritual seekers may explore a variety of religious traditions to suture together a spiritual lifestyle and world view (Gottlieb 2013). But most discover spiritual resources outside a traditional religious community, i.e. they may be solitary practitioners, clients of a spiritual therapist or adherents of a new spiritual movement, which heralds a new religion or rekindles an ancient one outside of its culture of origin. Spirituality-beyond-religion is thus brimming with the promise of spiritual renewal and the peril of 'spiritual anarchy' (Tacey 2003, p. 42).

An open-minded stance would acknowledge the bivalence of spirituality, but the literature is replete with monopolar models which celebrate only the light and love awaiting spiritual seekers. This erasure of the dark side of human spiritual journeying stands in stark contrast to the recognition in traditional religions of the 'dark night of the soul' (May 2004), 'inner demons' personified as 'wrathful deities' (Berghash and Jillson 2001) and the 'Shadow of the Lord' (Schnaper and Schnaper 1969). The aim of this article is to offer a counterbalancing perspective by foregrounding the unconscious depths of our humanity and demonstrating that spiritual seekers cannot afford to circumnavigate the dark nights which haunted their religious predecessors. After a commentary on the vanishing tricks to which the darkness has been subject in some spirituality scholarship, it is argued here that transpersonal psychology holds the keys to unlocking this darkness, notably via its metaphors of 'shadows' and 'daimons', and then enlisting it in the service of spiritual growth. Case examples illustrate the twin dangers among spiritual seekers and leaders of repudiating their shadow-side on the one hand, and revelling in it on the other, both of which derive from a partial and polarised approach to the spiritual life. The core argument is that if spirituality is the quest for health-*qua*-wholeness-*qua*-holiness (Craigie 2010, p. 56), then it is incumbent upon us to engage the whole of our humanity, including our unconscious depths.

Spirituality and Darkness

Many proponents of spirituality concur on its monopolarity and unidirectionality, i.e. it is acclaimed as an exclusively positive phenomenon flowing from the life-force, guided by light and love, and propelling us inexorably in the direction of health, happiness and harmony (Bregman 2006). When they simultaneously endorse a universal spirituality which embraces everyone and everything, there is no scope in their conceptual schema to countenance the dark side of humanity. In a healthcare context, Craigie (2010, pp. 31–46) defines the human spirit as a salugenic life-force, which positively connects us to communities, activities, meanings-in-life and the transcendent Spirit, and it becomes inconceivable that there could be pathogenic forms of community, activity, meaning-making or relatedness to Spirit. Similar observations appertain to the way in which spirituality has been envisaged in education (e.g. Hay and Nye 2006) and social work (e.g. Canda and Furman 1999). The contradiction appears when spirituality is said to be synonymous with 'the whole' of our humanity (Canda and Furman 1999, p. 46), with spiritual care as 'holistic care' (Swinton 2001, p. 168), in spite of the sequestration of the darker side of our nature from all things spiritual.

A positive universal spirituality is further strained when applied to the societal context—in Ursula King's (2008) account of global spirituality, the only way to preserve its monopolarity is to construe darkness as an outgrowth of the 'lack or loss of spirituality' (pp. 165–166), although it is unclear how a deficiency in the life-force could be sufficiently

powerful to engender societal evils. The few spirituality scholars who have taken the darkness seriously have displaced it onto the secular or religious realms in order to buttress a pristine spirituality. For example, Ó Murchú (1997, pp. 34–38) attributes the dark side of humanity and history to a distortion of spirituality consequent upon ancient patriarchal religions, on the one hand, and modern materialistic cultures, on the other. But most scholars have reconfigured religions as vehicles for positive spirituality with the effect that religions have also been shorn of their dark side (e.g. King 2008; Sheldrake 2014).

There are, however, a few dissenting voices. Holloway and Moss (2010, pp. 36–39) invite us to recall the dark side of religion, which can be resurrected within new spiritual movements, and draw our attention to the distinctive phenomenon of spiritual distress, which can surface within spiritual journeys. The implication is that spiritual teaching which sidesteps the potential for spiritual darkness could be fatally flawed. Such is the message from Earl's (2001) account of the way in which spirituality has been packaged for children in educational contexts. She dubs it a 'misfaction' (pp. 287–288) insofar as positive spirituality is only a partial truth and therefore a partial falsehood, and one which may do more harm than good since those who imbibe it are deprived of the tools for recognising and remedying darkness encountered along the spiritual path. It has been left to transpersonal psychologists to explore the workings of the dark side of humanity and its pivotal role in spiritual development, and it is to these thinkers that we now turn.

The Shadow and the Daimonic

Transpersonal psychology is the movement within depth psychology, which seeks to make sense of the role of unconscious forces in shaping or sabotaging the spiritual journey towards self-actualisation and self-transcendence (Daniels 2005). The dark side of our psyche is dark because it is submerged beneath ego-consciousness—this is partly on account of the layering of the psyche whereby the deepest layers sediment prior to the emergence of consciousness, and partly on account of the defences of the maturing ego which repress some experiences from consciousness. So it is originally a darkness of obscurity and mystery, rather than a darkness of degeneracy, disease or 'evil'. If it is now primarily associated with pathogenic forms of darkness, this is in large measure a by-product of our tendency to repress impulses which are anathema to our ego-ideals as incubated in families, schools and churches. The pathology in the sense of 'the way (*logos*) to tragedy (*pathos*)' is twofold. On the one hand, socially problematic impulses driven by lust or aggression may become more powerful as a result of the ego-defence of repression; it is when they cease to be under the taming influence of consciousness that they become pathogenic since they can erupt more violently. On the other hand, spiritually beneficent impulses towards more unconventional forms of creativity or morality, along with spiritual openness to a transpersonal realm beyond the personal ego and consensus reality, are also squashed. The message is that spirituality must engage the whole self and especially its unconscious depths. This has been succinctly formulated by Washburn (2003, pp. 28–34) as 'regression in the service of transcendence'.

The unconscious has to be approached obliquely via metaphors. The most popular metaphor is that of the shadow from the work of Carl Jung (Storr 1998)—this has been incorporated into transpersonal psychology (e.g. Daniels 2005; Wilber 2006) and psychotherapy with spiritual seekers (e.g. Abrams and Zweig 1991; Rowan 2005). An alternative metaphor is that of the daimonic—this is an ancient Greek notion rehabilitated by

the existential psychotherapist May (1970), although he also draws upon insights into the divine and the demonic in the writings of his mentor Tillich (1964). Given the embryonic state of our understanding of human darkness, it seems prudent to hold both metaphors in mind.

Jung construed the shadow-side of the human psyche as a multi-levelled phenomenon. The first level is that of the personal shadow, a biological and biographical shadow unique to each person, consisting of whatever innate instincts and transpersonal potentials we have suppressed in the course of adapting to society, along with archaic and traumatic memories, which could not be contained by consciousness. Its contents are accessible to consciousness in the form of spontaneous outbursts from which we hastily seek to dissociate ourselves, as well as images crystallising in our minds during altered states of consciousness induced by dreams, meditation or contemplative prayer (Storr 1998, pp. 91–96; Wilber 2006, pp. 74–76). The second level is that of the collective shadow, an ancestral shadow which accrued in the course of history in respect of each collectivity to which we belong, both particularistic social groups and the human species as a whole. The personal shadow is rooted in the shadow of our social group, which has moulded our ego-ideal and world view in accordance with ethnic and religious creeds; the latter is in turn incubated within the shadow of the species with its ancient taboos and metaphysical capacity for intuiting mystery (Storr 1998, pp. 389–396; Comte-Sponville 2008, pp. 140–155). So as more of our personal shadow is unveiled, more of our collective shadow will come to greet us. Jung hypothesised that there was also a third level of an archetypal Shadow imprinted upon the unconsciousness of the species, albeit forever inaccessible to consciousness (Storr 1998, p. 415).

The alternative metaphor of the daimonic originated in ancient Greece, although it was erroneously transliterated as the demonic in mediaeval Europe. May (1970, p. 123) regards the daimonic as the very ground of our being, and it fulfils the same function in his schema as the life-force in spirituality scholarship and the complex of innate biological and transpersonal impulses in Jungian psychology. So the daimonic bridges the animal, human and divine aspects of our nature and matures in three stages. In the first stage, the daimonic is the impersonal force of nature, which shows itself in the infant's first breath or loud shriek for life and its greedy suckling at the breast. This is the voice of nature seeking to survive and thrive, but the power of the daimonic to colonise our entire being is precisely what has engendered fear of the daimonic, i.e. if it remains in an untamed form, our subsequent sexual and aggressive urges can result in rape and murder (ibid., pp. 159–160). So in the second stage, the daimonic has to be humanised, socialised and personalised. This unfolds in the process of socialisation as we become capable of dialogue with others and ourselves, i.e. in interpersonal dialogue, we recognise the rights of others and in intrapersonal dialogue, we negotiate with our daimons rather than allowing them to dictate to us. In this way, the daimonic flows through us in a more conscious and controlled manner, energising and inspiring us without harming our integrity or that of others (ibid., pp. 155–157). Third, the daimonic becomes transpersonal when it connects our own unique being to the Being as a whole in which we participate. In concrete terms, we inhabit a particular historical-cultural era and to be connected to our own daimonic ground is to be connected to our destiny in a given historical-cultural formation, so that we live and labour in a manner which brings our unique gifts and foibles into alignment with the needs and problems of our times (ibid., p. 163, 177). This was understood by the ancient Greek philosophers, i.e. Plato realised that the sublime life-force of Eros was daimonic; Socrates took advice from his daimon on how to educate young citizens and how to respond to his accusers; and Aristotle's practical ethics revolved around living in harmony with one's

daimons. It is also evident in the original Latin translation of daimons as *genii,* i.e. tutelary spirits presiding over the destiny of a person, constitutive of one's genius or the source of one's generativity (ibid., pp. 122–125).

Diamond (1991) prefers the daimonic metaphor on the grounds that Jung tended to personify the shadow as an autonomous sub-personality, which could furnish an opt-out clause for those wanting to repudiate responsibility for the deeds of their shadow. But just as the shadow may remain undifferentiated, so the daimonic may take on the distinct 'personality' of a daimon. In my view, the advantage conferred by the daimonic is that it enables us to recognise that our experience of powerful forces from the unconscious can engender both eudaimonic (life-affirming) and dysdaimonic (life-negating) spiritual paths, depending upon the moral standpoint we adopt after encountering our daimons. So in its origins, the daimonic is neither good nor evil, and in any given human life, it often brings together our most laudable and lamentable proclivities, but the halls of fame and infamy feature those who fully realise their daimonic destiny, i.e. both eudaimonic and dysdaimonic geniuses (Diamond 1996, pp. 57–71, 256–261).

There are three main responses to the unconscious shadow or daimonic ground among spiritual seekers and leaders, which will be examined in the remainder of this article. First, a putatively enlightened spiritual pathway may be pursued by the conscious ego in oblivion to its own shadow or daimons. Second, those who are more consciously connected to their shadow may capitulate to it, resulting in an idolatry of the shadow or a dysdaimonic spirituality. Third, an imaginal engagement of the shadow conduces towards more holistic spiritual growth whatever our own chosen path may be.

Denial of the Shadow

Spiritual journeying in adulthood can serve to further repress the personal shadow when spiritual ideals are predicated upon a denigration of the body, sexuality and intimacy. The psychotherapist Battista (1996) provides case studies of spiritual seekers who deployed their spiritual development as a defence against holistic growth, resulting in what he calls a false spirituality. Whilst masochists cleaved to a solitary and ascetic lifestyle in order to deny their desires for and difficulties around intimacy, narcissists paraded their asceticism to prove their superiority over others in their social network, but in both cases, spirituality drove the underlying socio-emotional difficulties further underground and prevented healthy relationship formation. Battista (1996) construes the task of the therapist as bracketing the (self-) deceptive spiritual persona and addressing the subterranean shadow in order to pave the way towards holistic growth.

The repudiation of the shadow is also common among spiritual leaders—for example, Mahatma Gandhi exerted a tyranny over his own body, sexuality and family, whilst championing the way of non-violence in the wider world (Erikson 1969). It is more troubling when the leader's shadow darkens the spiritual path of his or her followers. Fleming et al. (2007) have undertaken research and rehabilitation with priests in the USA who were decommissioned from service after decades of child sexual abuse. Many entered the seminary during adolescence, already carrying a shadow-side of frustrated socio-emotional needs and (homo) sexual stirrings, and hoping that their spiritual vocation would suffice to sublimate these. Instead, their shadow gathered more psychic energy until it was strong enough to breach priestly taboos, and they sought intimacy with child parishioners upon whom they unleashed their (homo) sexual shadow (ibid., pp. 67–70, 88–92). Whilst it

is more burdensome for the ego to deny a shadow which is enacted in the world, it can still be compartmentalised from the public persona *and even the self-concept* (ibid., p. 112, 131). The rehabilitation of priests revolves around confessing their shadow (sins) to themselves, others and God so that they may recommence the spiritual journey with the whole of themselves on board (ibid., pp. 46–47, 214–217, 227–228).

Recovery is tortuous for survivors whose socio-emotional and spiritual development have been torn asunder by the earthly representative of their Lord. Spiritual trauma is a distinct component of post-traumatic stress, and it is compounded when church authorities mobilise defensive strategies to shore up their own reputation—not only the standard ones of denying the abuse and/or blaming its victims, but also spiritually framed ones exhorting people to forgive and forget in order to advance in spiritual virtue (Doyle 2009). Many survivors have been left in a spiritual wasteland with a loss of faith in God and the church, and a sense that their soul has been irreparably sullied or stolen (Crompton 1998, pp. 146–147, 158–160, 173). It is not always appropriate to embark upon therapy with a representative of the natal faith, and open-mindedness is required as to the prospects of reconciliation with the original faith, conversion to an alternative one or resolute non-faith.

The pathogenic denial and discharge of the shadow is a multifarious phenomenon, which can unfold in any spiritual relationship or community since it is neither faith specific nor gender specific. There are teachers from diverse spiritual traditions with authoritarian and narcissistic shadows who delight in castigating their disciples' faults in order to bolster their own power and virtuosity (Anthony et al. 1987). In effect, they are projecting their own shadow-vices onto their followers. There are also women who specialise in spiritual healing who have engineered a role-reversal with their clients in order to meet their own suppressed needs for therapy and intimacy. Wehr (2000), herself a victim of a woman healer, depicts them as wounded-wounding healers. In other words, they have recognised but not recovered from their own wounds, so they consciously aspire to heal others whilst unconsciously craving this healing for themselves. After the client has deferred to the wisdom of the healer, the latter discloses her own wounds and solicits the healing services of the client who is now caught in a trap, feeling obliged to help the therapist upon whom the client's own spiritual and psychological well-being seems to depend. Isomorphic shadows—for example, where both client and therapist are victims of childhood abuse—furnish the ideal context for wounded-wounding forms of spiritual therapy.

In theory, adult spiritual seekers should be less vulnerable than child parishioners since they can choose their therapist or spiritual community. In practice, a plethora of factors conspires to militate against mature discernment. First, many spiritual seekers in the Western world are enchanted by a monopolar spirituality so their spiritual journeying may be characterised by a childlike naïveté. Second, the Eastern model of the guru–disciple relationship structures many of the new spiritual communities in the West, and this is conducive to an idealisation of the guru as Enlightenment incarnate, with the most diligent disciples most susceptible to abdicating their duty of discernment. Third, when Eastern gurus establish movements in the West and acculturate to a more licentious and luxurious lifestyle, this can fan the flames of a shadow-side which was hitherto controlled by the rigours and rules in their native monastery or ashram. This constellation of factors means that the shadow of the guru can be denied by all parties even when it intrudes regularly upon the spiritual community, and denial in a spiritual context can escalate into transcendental denial.

This is instantiated by Butler's (1991) insider account of the Vajradhatu movement in the USA, an offshoot of Tibetan Buddhism established by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in the aftermath of his escape from an occupied Tibet. Chögyam was renowned for his

compassion and scholarship, but became addicted to alcohol after immigrating to the USA and allowed his shadow to reign over his spirituality until his teachings included a transcendental denial of his shadow. So he consumed alcohol at all times whilst claiming that his Vajra nature meant that he had transcended the limits of the body and needed alcohol to 'earth' him and render him 'human'. The circle of denial was sealed by the isomorphism between the guru's shadow and that of his close disciples, some of whom were succumbing to alcoholism themselves, and some of whom had spent their childhood colluding with the family secret of an alcohol-dependent parent. As Chögyam was dying of alcohol-induced dementia in the mid-1980s, his increasingly bizarre teachings were explained by his disciples as evidence of his encounters with *dakinis* (female sky-walkers). By the late-1980s, his successor Osel Tendzin was forced to confess his HIV-positive status to the Vajradhatu community after some of his disciples (who were also his sexual partners) were diagnosed with the virus; Osel Tendzin was well aware of his medical condition, but believed, like his predecessor, that his Vajra nature provided him with immunity from disease.

Shadow work is increasingly viewed as integral to spiritual development (Wilber 2006, pp. 202–204), but in a spiritual community this work needs to be performed on a public stage. For example, rituals for gurus to confess misdemeanours and for followers to mourn breaches of trust might prevent a guru's shadow from growing to the point where it destroys the community itself (Butler 1991). But a more proactive approach would be for leaders to publicly reclaim their daimons *before* any damage is done, analogous to the healing ceremonies in the Yoruba tribe in Africa (May 1970, pp. 131–134).

Idealisation of the Shadow

When the shadow is denied, spiritual ideals remain intact by dint of their sequestration from the subterranean shadow. If the shadow erupts, the split between conscious ideals and subconscious realities becomes manifest, and this generates a spiralling of denial for as long as spiritual seekers and leaders adhere to their original spiritual ideals. But a volcanic shadow can transmute spiritual ideals until they reflect its own destructive daimons, spewing forth an idolatry of the shadow; under these circumstances, the original spiritual ideals will be repressed to the unconscious where they constellate into a virtuous shadow (Storr 1998, p. 91).

The rise and fall of the Aum Shinrikyo movement in Japan during the 1980s illuminates the transition to an idealisation of the shadow. Its yoga and alternative healing centre in Tokyo attracted a wide range of young spiritual seekers, but its founder Asahara started to subject his close disciples to a punitive regime of solitary confinement and physical chastisement. The more he acted out his hitherto camouflaged authoritarian proclivities, the more his vision of creating the Tibetan Kingdom of Shambhala became infused with apocalyptical violence, until he preached the doctrine that even killing could be 'compassionate', which was later used to justify the bombing of the Tokyo subway. Not surprisingly, Aum Shinrikyo youths were left in disarray, bereft of cognitive templates for processing the facts that beautiful Buddhist ideals had been corrupted, and that the most faithful among them were now imprisoned for murder along with their guru. Importantly, the doctrine of compassionate killing was not simply a reflection of the personal shadow of the guru, but also a reflection of the collective shadow of his tradition, since there are stories of the Buddha and bodhisattvas committing crimes with a purity of intent which

renders them beneficent in the Buddhist tradition, and there has been Buddhist-inspired warfare (Jones 2008, pp. 71–85).

Other world religions also harbour a collective shadow which may be discerned within their scriptures, facilitating the emergence of dysdaimonic spiritual movements which rebel simultaneously against the hegemony of secular consumer capitalism and the impotence of pacifist religious creeds. Jones' (2008) study of religious terrorism among People of the Book shows that it appeals to young spiritual seekers who have not been socialised within a traditional religious community, and involves the creation of new spiritual communities on the Internet and in clandestine cells (p. 13), with some networking among members of Jewish, Christian and Muslim groups insofar as they struggle against a common enemy (p. 149). On the one hand, the ideal of the Kingdom of God is endowed with an extreme conservative-authoritarian interpretation, envisaged as a totalistic world order where abortion, adultery, homosexuality and heresy become capital offences (ibid., pp. 26–27). On the other hand, the shadow of the monotheistic God of these traditions is worshipped, since only the God of vengeance could sanction such terrorism, and this is justified with reference to a highly selective reading of some passages in the Hebrew scriptures (ibid., p. 143). Contrary to popular opinion, suicide bombing can be a profoundly spiritual act. In the language of the daimonic, the suicide bomber exists ecstatically at the juncture of the eudaimonic and the dysdaimonic, allowing himself to be 'possessed' by his divine and demonic daimons, in a total self-transcendence which heralds mortality (of the body) and immortality (for the soul). In religious parlance, he purifies the remnants of his own sin and purges the world of a host of sinners, sacrificing self and others for the sake of realising the Kingdom of God on earth. From a psychodynamic point of view, suicidal self-sacrifice gratifies the libidinal impulses which seek a mystical reunion with the divine, whilst the destruction of heretics as children of secularity gratifies the aggressive impulses to extirpate that which displeases the divine (Jones 2008, pp. 135–136). In the process, the shadow of the religious terrorist is conflated with the shadow of God, so the wrath of the human warrior is projected onto God and religious wars are sanctified by appeals to the will of God.

In Jungian terms, the God-image as a human construct within Middle Eastern monotheisms all too often suffers from incompleteness. If mainstream religious adherents bow down to the God of love and forgiveness whilst forgetting God's shadow, their terrorist counterparts rally around the God of war and vengeance whilst bracketing God's mercy. Thus, the essential mystery of God as the *Coincidentia Oppositorum* (the coincidence of opposites) is lost to both sides. Since the God-image is the archetypal symbol of the human Self in Jungian psychology—i.e. the Self understood as the transpersonal centre of the psyche (Storr 1998, p. 229)—both conventional believers and their aberrant terrorist counterparts have failed to integrate the diverse aspects of God/Self within their cosmologies and self-concepts.

Christianity consolidated the schism between God and His shadow, personified as Satan in the Christian scriptures (Avens 1977), and Satanism thus expresses the pure form of dysdaimonic spirituality. The Church of Satan was established in the USA in 1966 by Anton LaVey, whose psychological approach to religion means that the name and image of Satan are invoked during ceremonies as a way of dramatising the destructive daimons of the human psyche such as envy, lust and hatred (LaVey 1969, p. 25). Ivey's (2005) research with ex-Satanists in South Africa lays bare the pathogenic childhood experiences which incubated the subsequent adult desire for such a destructive spiritual pathway. Stories of maternal neglect and paternal punishment suggested to him that these subjects had been persecuted by their parents during childhood to the point of suffering soul

murder. To become a Satanist is then tantamount to a spiritual identification with a demonic persecutor of innocents. This allows the practitioner to pour balm on the wounds of their childhood impotence by appropriating the powers of darkness, to dispose of the God who symbolises their own noxious father and to re-enact their own soul murder on accursed others. Ivey's (2005) informants recovered from their Satanic spirituality by reclaiming the repressed virtuous shadow of their original innocent child and converting to the Catholic faith. However, the substitution of divine purity for demonic purity leaves the polarised antinomy intact.

Both the denial of the shadow and its idealisation transport us into the realm of the demonic. Tillich (1964, pp. 108–113) characterises the demonic as a distortion of self-transcendence consequent upon an identification of a particular bearer of holiness with the Holy itself. So gurus who claim to have transcended their human embodiment fall into the clutches of the demonic just as much as religious terrorists who equate a specific human religion with the will of God. Those who would circumnavigate the demonic need to come face-to-face with the inherent ambiguity of life-on-earth, an ambiguity which becomes most pronounced in the spiritual quest for self-transcendence, when we aspire towards the Transcendent which is forever beyond our reach (ibid., pp. 32–34, 92–93, 101–105). A dialogue with our personal and collective shadows, or an experiential attunement to the ambiguity of our daimonic ground, then becomes an indispensable safeguard for any spiritual journey, preventing its descent into the demonic.

Dialogue with the Shadow

Jung regarded dialogue with the shadow as particularly pertinent for adults with a hypertrophied consciousness—arguably the predominant profile among spiritual seekers and spirituality scholars—as it rectifies the imbalance of their psyches (Storr 1998, p. 226). He believed that development abides by the law of *enantiodromia*, an ancient Greek term for the transitions between opposing elements such as night and day, life and death, good and evil (Avens 1977, p. 199). This intra-psychic conversation is a painful and prolonged affair as it is impossible to eradicate either polarity, but eventually, we can grow to a higher level of consciousness, beyond the psychic battlefield, where we can at least appreciate the *necessity* for the coexistence of the opposites and endure them with greater equanimity. Symbols perform this transcendent function—for example, the Yin-Yang symbol of Taoism illustrates that the dark Yin energies are always already contained within the bright Yang light (and vice versa), and that when Yang is over-cultivated, it transmogrifies into Yin (and vice versa).

This process foregrounds the *moral* dimension of spirituality and assists with the existential realisation of the injunction to 'love thy enemy'. For those who identify with life-affirming spiritual ideals, attending to their shadow-vices militates against the tendency to demonise others as they start to re-own their shadows and to recognise the universality of impulses hitherto deemed perverse. To honour our own shadow is to deepen our compassion for those who have succumbed to theirs, as our capacity to love the enemy without is positively correlated with our capacity to love the enemy within (Hillman 1991). Conversely, for those who espouse life-negating spiritual ideals, an appreciation of their shadow virtues reorients them to the God of love within themselves; it no longer makes sense to destroy God when this equates to destroying a part of one's self. There is a double paradox here. On the one hand, spiritual practitioners are exhorted to grapple with internal

conflicts as the prerequisite for becoming more reconciled with themselves and others. On the other hand, they emerge as more spiritual beings according to the canons of holistic growth and inter-faith harmony, even though their spirituality is divested of some of its purity in the process.

How can we communicate with our unconscious? According to depth psychologists, our unconscious is always communicating to us in the guise of psychosomatic symptoms and dreams, but our daytime busyness and night-time drowsiness mean that we rarely heed the messages. Learning to dream by the light of day is advisable for the serious practitioner of shadow work, and Jung developed the technique of *active imagination* to this end. If we carve out a regular space–time for silence and solitude, we may discern the murmurings of another voice within us or the spontaneous formation of an image in our mind; at this point we should devote all our attention to it until it becomes sufficiently loud or clear to be meaningful; and afterwards we need to record our experiences to render them memorable by writing a message, drawing an image, performing a dance sequence or vocalising a melody (cf. Hannah 1991; Rowan 2005, pp. 125–147). Sometimes the shadow emerges as a concrete human or animal figure, in which case we can literally embark upon a dialogue with it, enquiring who it is, what it wants from us and what it has to teach us. In Jung's own life, integration of the shadow gave birth to the mandala—a cross within a circle where each quadrant represents a part of the psyche, so the mandala symbolises the whole transpersonal Self (Storr 1998, pp. 231–236).

Westerners expecting only solace in the spiritual realm are more likely to find that encountering their shadow triggers a spiritual emergency necessitating spiritual therapy (Grof and Grof 1991, p. 45). Psychotherapists have helped those with an ostensibly enlightened spirituality to converse with their 'demonic' shadow (Stone and Winkelman 1991), and those who identify with the demonic to connect with their 'virtuous' shadow until they can identify with it once again, without negating the other voice within them (Goldberg 1996, pp. 89–109). Some may prefer group work where people learn from and assist with the spiritual journeying of others. For example, in Rebillot's (1989) Hero's Journey, each group member has to imagine the hero/heroine who embodies their spiritual ideals, the 'demon' within who would sabotage their spiritual journey and the 'spirit guide' who can lead them beyond the conflict and to the gateway of the Mystery (i.e. their transpersonal Self, or the deity within). Group members take turns to vocalise and dramatise each aspect of their psyche, whilst the facilitator and peers shepherd the process towards a successful transpersonal resolution.

Stanislav Grof and his partner Christina pioneered Holotropic Breathwork as a way of inducing altered states of consciousness and facilitating psychic integration, which replaced earlier controversial experiments with LSD (cf. Bache 1991; Grof and Grof 1991). According to Grof (1989, pp. 239–241), our everyday egoic consciousness is hylotropic (from the ancient Greek *hylé*, or matter) as it wraps itself around material objects available to the gross senses and known biographical events and hails this as the only reality, whereas a spiritual or transpersonal consciousness is holotropic (from the ancient Greek *holos*, or whole) as it opens us up to a gamut of experiences transcending the conscious ego and consensus reality. Holotropic Breathwork occurs in week-long residential retreats where participants engage in hyperventilation in tandem with music, drumming or chanting to access holotropic consciousness, and then integrate their experiences into their self-concept and world view by discussing them and drawing mandalas (Grof and Grof 1991, pp. 318–326).

Grof's (1989) cartography of consciousness is a more elaborate and empirically verified version of Jung's schema. The descent into the personal unconscious takes us into the

collective unconscious via the perinatal domain, since the four Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPM) contain within them not only personal and hitherto submerged memories of being in the womb and emerging into the world, but also collective archetypal figures and forms associated with religion and mythology, such as deities and demons, paradise and purgatory. BPM I denotes the amniotic universe, often experienced as a paradise provided by Mother Nature, but sometimes as an apocalypse if a foetus or the mother was subject to abuse. BPM II is depicted as cosmic engulfment insofar as there is no escape from the womb, only a never-ending descent into the underworld, and images of demonic figures crystallise at this point. BPM III and IV pertain to the life–death struggle of the foetus as it journeys through the contracting birth canal (death) and is born into the light of the world (rebirth), which may generate images of the crucified and resurrected Christ (ibid., pp. 12–35).

What does this have to do with the spiritual journey? Possibly everything. A spiritual journey, particularly for spiritual seekers socialised into a secular world, will entail the death of the egoic self and the birth of a transpersonal Self, so a titanic struggle is on the horizon, and this recapitulates the struggles of the foetus in the womb *and* those of the species in history as expressed in mythology. The ego clings to itself as the only form of life susceptible to its control and comprehension, whilst the unconscious drags us deeper into the quagmire of shadow land for the sake of an uncertain salvation. We may emerge more whole, but we are unlikely to be unharmed. Instead, *let us be sufficiently healthy-whole-holy to re-absorb, recover from or redeem the harm done to us and by us.*

Conclusion

Transpersonal psychology invites us to reconceptualise spirituality to take account of the unconscious depths of our humanity, and to honour our shadows and daimons as resources for holistic spiritual growth. A universal monopolar spirituality is contraindicated by socio-historical facticities and depth psychologies alike; a dipolar model of spirituality is more apt insofar as spiritual seekers and leaders may be wedded to eudaimonic or dysdaimonic trajectories; but the most popular spiritual pathways in the contemporary West are anti-daimonic as they aspire for a blissful transcendence which bypasses the underworld of the psyche (Diamond 1996, p. 187). The supposition that spirituality is an independent variable which can be manipulated to produce harmony, health and happiness is flawed; rather, the character of our spirituality is contingent upon our prior social, psychological and moral development. We are not at liberty to jettison biographical debris let alone biological daimons when we cast off from a secular shore and steer towards a transcendent horizon; they are the raw ingredients of our spirituality and how we cook them in an alchemical sense will determine our destinies (see Rowan 2005, pp. 173–194).

Nevertheless, transpersonal psychology is not a panacea to the spiritual predicaments of our age. The theoretical problem is that it leaves us stranded amidst metaphorically framed conceptual schema, for the unconscious is more resistant to theorisation and experimentation than most phenomena, and the seeding, solidifying and surfacing of its variegated contents remain necessarily opaque. In effect, this impairs its transmissibility, i.e. those who do not already have access to transpersonal experiences or depth psychology may dispute its veracity or credibility. The practical problem is that transpersonal psychologists tend to overemphasise spiritual development in adulthood whilst apparently assuming that this terminates in the discovery of the transpersonal Self. Parents and educators should be

preventing the excessive repression of social vices and spiritual potentials among children, so that they may be better equipped for transpersonal development. Spiritual seekers and leaders who have cultivated their transpersonal Self need to reorient themselves to the social world if they are to fulfil their destiny, for insights which are not realised in life, love and labour may become sterile (May 1970). However, the spiritual problem is the most vexatious. The privileged goal of the spiritual quest is Enlightenment, whereby the transpersonal Self experiences itself as one with the species, world history, the cosmos and Creative Spirit (Grof 1989, pp. 133–147; Storr 1998, pp. 216–223; Wilber 2006, pp. 241–243). Whilst it is acknowledged that spiritual seekers tend to have fleeting glimpses of the non-dual rather than sustaining Enlightenment on earth, the assumption is that the latter is possible and desirable. If the fully realised transpersonal Self is identical to the Transcendent, this takes us beyond the limits of the human and throws us back into the abyss of the demonic, at least from a theological vantage point (Tillich 1964). Here, a celebration of our spirituality and self-transcendence has to be counterbalanced by respect for our fallibility and finitude. To appreciate this, we may need to revisit some theological writings underpinning transpersonal concepts; for example, whilst the transpersonal Self experiences the coincidence of opposites within itself, the Transcendent actually resides beyond all opposites (Henderson 2010).

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