

“Integrating the Shadow”

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In my last program in August, “What is *The Shift* All About?” We talked about the predictions for December 21, 2012 – the end of the Mayan Calendar. One of them was that the world would end. Well ... we’re all still here. But I think that we have to agree with the rock group R.E.M...

It’s the end of the world as we know it.

We have seen how corruption and greed leads to the collapse of social, political, and educational systems – no matter how powerful. We have seen how the abuse and neglect of our planet leads to natural disasters. We have seen how the abuse and neglect of human beings leads to the mass exploitation and murder of innocent people. The effects of our ego-centered consciousness – of our “separation mindset” – are now clearly *in our face*. It is time for humanity to wake up, face reality, and take responsibility.

In order to effectively address the challenges we now face, humanity must evolve into a higher level of consciousness. This higher level of consciousness goes by many names: Self-Actualization, Super Consciousness, Buddha Mind, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Christ Consciousness. It is the highest level of consciousness that humanity is capable of achieving.

Eighteenth Century German philosopher Georg Hegel wrote that Nature has a purpose and a direction towards *ever-greater expressions of “Universal Spirit” within the realm of time and space*. What does that mean? It means that evolution is driven by the spark of the Spirit of Life that dwells within every living thing.

According to this philosophy, humanity's destiny is to become fully aware of our Oneness with the Spirit of Life so that we can become conscious co-creators. We have both creative and destructive powers within us, but when we are not fully conscious of these forces, we create and destroy indiscriminately.

The first step in harnessing these forces within us is integrating the Shadow. Before I proceed with this topic, I'd like to offer this caveat: This is a profound subject, and I am *not* an expert. I offer to you my current level of understanding, which is far from complete, as well as my own personal experiences and insights. OK? Here goes...

What is the Shadow? The Shadow is like the mischievous child of a naive mother. When someone confronts the naive mother with her child's naughty behavior, she says, "Not my Johnny. My Johnny would never do that!" Meanwhile, the kid is wreaking havoc right under her nose. He will continue to do so until she chooses to "see" what her child is really doing. Once she opens her eyes and admits that yeah – maybe he *isn't* a little angel – *then* she can begin the disciplinary process.

The Shadow is the parts of our Self that we refuse to see. We are like the naive mother. We all have forces of fear, greed, lust, rage, envy, and pride within us, but we often refuse to admit it. If we've ever said, "I can't believe I said that!" or "I can't believe I did that!" or "How did I get into this mess *again?*" Oh that Little Johnny....

You see, there is no quality in one human that doesn't exist in all human beings. If we are to be *completely* honest with ourselves, we may have to admit that occasionally we ...

- Do wish that the world would revolve around us.
- Do have homicidal thoughts, feelings, and even full-fledged fantasies.
- Do have sexual urges that may be considered "*very naughty.*"

We are part of the natural world, so we do have certain “animal” instincts. When we acknowledge these forces within us, then we can choose how to respond to them. Without awareness, there is no choice. In the Shadow, these forces are free to operate on their own without our conscious control.

How is the Shadow created? We don’t come into this world a “blank slate.” We are born with certain genetic tendencies already in place, but we also inherit certain traits based on human, societal, cultural, and family influences.

We sometimes really *hate* to admit that we are *strongly influenced* by these external powers. For example, we may hate our manipulative, controlling father without realizing that we are just as manipulating and controlling as he is. We’re just sneakier about it – so sneaky we even fool ourselves!

Societal and family roles also create Shadow. As soon as we are born, we are immediately cast into a societal role – that of gender – for our entire lives based on our external parts. In order to feel loved and accepted in society, we hide any traits that do not fit our assigned role. Those traits become Shadow.

We may also get drafted into family roles. In many families, one child is often the “Good Girl” or “Good Boy.” Another child often gets stuck with the privilege of being the repository of the family’s dysfunction as the assigned “Bad Girl” or “Bad Boy.” In order to feel safe and loved, we be who our parents expect us to be, and we hide any traits that do not fit our assigned role. More traits are cast into Shadow.

The church may indoctrinate us into roles. A popular one is the “poor, miserable sinner” role. We are taught to reject our human “sinful” nature, but we aren’t allowed to embrace our Divine nature either – doesn’t fit the role! That doesn’t leave much space for us to be. This way is indeed narrow; it’s like walking a tightrope. With this role, *much* of who we truly are gets cast into Shadow.

Throughout our life experiences, *so much* of who we authentically are can end up in Shadow. As a result, some of us enter adulthood *having no clue* who we really are. Often, that realization comes in the form

of severe depression. To heal ourselves, we must begin the work of digging up those lost parts of ourselves.

As we begin digging deep within us, we may find an entire society of characters. Let me introduce you to some of the citizens in my psyche. There's ...

- The obsessive, neurotic control freak
- The malcontent
- The cynical conspiracy theorist
- The judge, jury, and executioner
- The abandoned, neglected child

Some of these citizens were deposited into my psyche when I was young by messages I received from the influential people in my life. I can thank my father for the cynical, conspiracy theorist. Some of the citizens are there as a result of childhood events. The abandoned, neglected child is there because my mother was ill for many years when I was a child and was unable to care for me.

My abandoned, neglected child was in the dungeon of Shadow for a long time where she was busily sabotaging my relationships. I wondered why I didn't have any close friends. I realized that I was very quick to judge people "bad friends" because deep down, I expected them to meet all the needs my mother didn't meet. I was *really* judging my friends to be a "bad mother," which wasn't fair to them because they couldn't possibly meet those needs.

I brought my abandoned, neglected child out of the Shadow, and I'm now being the mother to her that I had always wished for. Now, she has a new name: my Thriving, Inner Child. I now enjoy some of the closest, most rewarding friendships I have ever had because she's no longer influencing my unreasonable expectations of them.

Some of my citizens have far too much power, like my obsessive, neurotic control freak. I now understand that as a child, I used this part of my psyche to help me feel safe when my family life was extremely unstable. I respect this part of my psyche for helping me survive during that turbulent time. However, that time is past. It has a new role now: it is The Sentinel. Its job is to alert me to possible danger. But I decide if the danger is truly present or if it is simply a ghost from the past. It no longer exercises tyrannical rule over my life, making me a nervous wreck.

The key is to acknowledge all of the citizens in our psyche and to find ways to integrate them, bringing them into harmonious balance with the rest of the psyche. We don't want any of them becoming either dictatorial rulers or saboteurs operating in the Shadow.

How many of you watched the movie, "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas" starring Jim Carey over the holidays?" The story takes place in a fictitious place called Whoville with a society of people called the Who's. The Grinch looks quite different from the other Who's, and so he is treated with contempt. As a result, he retreats into the mountains just outside of Whoville, to a place called "Mount Crumpit." From this place of social exile, he plots and schemes to steal their greatest joy: Christmas.



The Grinch

This story is a metaphor for integrating the Shadow. The Grinch represents the Shadow – all the characteristics within us that we refuse to acknowledge. The theme song, "You're a mean one – Mr. Grinch," is a wonderful expression of how we *really* feel about the Shadow – and that's being nice.

What the Grinch does to wreak havoc on Whoville is a metaphor for what the Shadow does in our personal and collective lives when it is *not integrated*.

In the movie, the Mayor of Whoville – Mayor Augustus Maywho – hates the Grinch and has absolutely no interest in bringing him down from Mount Crumpit and integrating him into society. Many people feel that Mayor Maywho bears an uncanny resemblance to a certain ex-Presidential candidate, but I'll let you decide! Mayor Maywho represents the ego, the governor of our psyche, which gives us our sense of personality and selfhood. However, it is incapable of creating peace and harmony within us because of its dedication to the idea of separation.



There is an aspect of our being that is capable of bringing peace, however. Our Divine Nature has the ability to transcend the illusion of separation. Who is the Savior in the story? It is Cindy Lou Who. She symbolizes Higher Consciousness .

Cindy Lou Who goes up to the Grinch's lair to invite him to the Whoville Christmas celebration. The Grinch tries everything he can to scare her away, but she is not scared. She overlooks his wild and wooly antics. She sees only the good in him.



We reclaim our wholeness by integrating all of the lost parts of ourselves – and ultimately the ego itself. The Grinch must be brought down from Mount Crumpit and lovingly integrated into society. Every aspect of ourselves must be released from the dungeon and brought out into the light of consciousness where we can then use its power in a conscious, beneficial way.

How do we know when aspects of ourselves are in Shadow?

- If we tend to put other people up on a pedestal, put ourselves down, or feel jealous of others, then our own beauty and achievements are in Shadow. Q: Why are we disempowering ourselves?
- If we feel our jaw tightening around certain people, often criticize others, or enjoy put-downs and gossip about people we don't like, then our own "warts" and failures are in Shadow. Q: Why can't we forgive ourselves?

We simply must accept the fact that we have both light and dark within us, and we work to find a balance. How do we find the balance? Here are some suggestions.

- Ask for help. We often deceive ourselves, but we can't deceive an objective observer. A therapist or spiritual counselor can gently make us aware of what needs to be balanced within us and guide us in finding that balance. *Be careful using a significant other for this purpose – it can easily turn into a mud-slinging session.*
- Find non-harmful ways to express anger. When I'm angry, I grab a rolled-up newspaper taped with packaging tape, go outside, find a tree, and whack it with all my might.
- Own the revenge impulse, but refuse to act on it. Ghandi once said, *"If you follow the old code of justice, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, you end up living in a blind and toothless world."*
- Use the arts to give expression to the Shadow, such as dance, drama, drawing, or painting. Can you imagine how much fun Jim Carey had playing "The Grinch?" I would have LOVED to have played that role!
- Spend time in meditation daily to get to know all the parts of ourselves.

This is difficult work, but we must be patient and persevere. The effect of our work is increased self-acceptance and self-love – which leads to the increased acceptance and love of others.

I will end this talk with something somber – and perhaps uncomfortable – for you all to consider. For thousands of years, mystics have taught that we create our own reality – and quantum physicists are now finding evidence of this truth. What we are experiencing in the outer world is merely a reflection of the dynamics taking place in our inner world – both on a personal and collective level.

In the movie “The Grinch Who Stole Christmas,” the things the Grinch does are funny and cute. But what if the story were different?

- What if he strolled into an elementary school and cold-bloodedly murdered 20 children and 6 adults?
- What if he entered a movie theater and coolly extinguished 12 lives?
- What if he sauntered down the halls of a college and randomly slaughtered 32 people?
- What if he marched through a high school, methodically executing 12 students and 1 teacher?

I think we have to admit that we have a *serious* problem with the Grinch in *OUR* Whoville. Now this children’s story takes on a whole new meaning. It is a very serious story with very serious implications. It is teaching us a lesson, and we really need to get it.

The young men of New Hope, Aurora, Virginia Tech, and Columbine were all outcasts. And from their place of social exile, they plotted and schemed and then committed these horrible acts of mass murder. That is what the Shadow does when it is not integrated. We really need Cindy Lou Who. We really need the wisdom of Higher Consciousness.

Because when we fail to integrate our Shadow, we unleash havoc not only in our own personal lives but also in the lives of Humanity as One. You see - we are all cells in the body of Humanity, and if any part of us is not at peace, the whole cannot be at peace. If any part of us is ill or hurt, the whole body is affected.

If we want peace in our outer world, we must first cultivate peace within. When we accomplish that, we will not need stricter gun control laws. We will not need gun control laws at all – because we will have no use for guns.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

May all living beings enjoy peace in body, speech, and mind.