EPONAQUEST BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Owning your Shadow: Projection and Transference

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Understanding the Shadow

To fully understand projection and transference, we must first understand the importance of working with our shadow. Our shadow, as it is commonly referred to, represents the parts of us that we fail to see, know or understand.

Origination of the Shadow: We come into the world whole and complete. During our socialization process, we begin to separate out and put away (into the shadow, so to speak) those parts of us that through experience we have deemed unacceptable. In general, the culturally ordinary or average qualities and characteristics encouraged by family and society are the ones that we allow into the public/light. Anything considered "less" or "better" or "different" or "unacceptable gets relegated to the shadow side of ourselves.

Our healing process is about becoming conscious and aware of *all* aspects of our selves and bringing all of the discarded, lost parts that have been relegated to the shadow back into our awareness for a more balanced integrated life.

Refusing to own one's shadow causes an accumulation or build-up of energy that pushes to be expressed or discharged. War, violence, psychosomatic illness, neurotic suffering and accidents are ways of unconsciously living out the shadow. Ceremony and ritual are healthier ways of playing out the shadow symbolically and consciously. The most ordinary and common way the shadow expresses itself is through projection and transference, a process which is universal and totally human. See below ~~

The evolution of consciousness requires us to integrate the shadow if we are to raise the consciousness of our world.

Projection and Transference

The shadow exchange that Robert Johnson refers to in his book, *Owning Your Own Shadow*, is an energetic exchange. If we do not take ownership of the shadow elements in us or remain unconscious, then rejected parts of the self have to be placed/projected or transferred onto someone or something else to create the energy exchange which robs both parties of their potential wholeness.

"Projection is the act of attributing your inner feelings, perceived weaknesses, and even unrecognized strengths to others because you are simply unable or stubbornly unwilling, to see these qualities in yourself. Transference is a more specific type of projection that occurs when your thoughts and feelings toward someone are strongly influenced by attitudes originally developed in a significant past relationship." (From *Way of the Horse,* by Linda Kohanov).

Healing Our Self

Repressed emotions and negative beliefs particularly about the self make us more vulnerable to projecting. We "throw" our unwanted part out onto another and see it on them or as them, thus creating a conflicting energy dynamic. Only through the realm of synthesis (or integration) is true healing possible. The first step is for us to allow the dynamics of opposition to be felt and experienced as opposing energies facing each other – if one can stay with the conflicting impulses long enough, (that is seeing and believing the energy belongs to the other while it actually doesn't) the two opposing forces can come to awareness, teach each other something and produce insight that serves them both.

Staying with the paradox, allows us to find the single eye (unified vision) that is beyond quarrel and compromise. The single vision moves our energy into a unified focus and allows for wholeness of being and action.

Often we want resolution to the contradictions and conflicts, but we would receive so much more if we could ask for the consciousness and perspective to bear the paradox of our lives.

"He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you." Friedrich Nietzsche