

Denial of Our Shadow

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Whole-number divisions in simple mathematics relate quite easily to cosmology. We start with zero — nothingness. No existence, no manifestation, no consciousness. Blotto. Then we leap into Oneness with Unity (or God). If there's any true magic, it's right there. Where did Unity come from? What are the origins of Consciousness? Anyway, from zero to one takes us right from nothing to God.

God, however, has a problem. How does Unity ever know itself? It needs the mirror of relatedness and contrast. So, God goes right to work creating the Universe through division by two, the polarity of opposites — night/day, black/white, yin/yang, masculine/feminine, on and on through all the apparently infinite expressions of duality. I suppose I should include good/bad, which to me is the weirdest duality of them all.

But God doesn't stop there. Duality leads to triplicity. Division by three — thesis/antithesis/synthesis, or action/reaction/consequence — is where time enters the picture. The answer to the old Zen riddle — *Why does time exist?* — always makes me smile: *So that everything doesn't happen at once.*

Triplicity then morphs into quaternary. Four is the number of atoms in carbon, which gives us the material plane through the manifestation of seemingly solid and durable structures that turn out, however, to be inevitably impermanent. Mountains seem solid and enduring to us, but they're actually changing over time, arising initially from immense geological pressures, then being worn down by erosion. We just don't live long enough to be aware of the kaleidoscopic movement of everything. Again, different perspectives.

We can take the cosmology of numerical division further — five is creativity, six is productivity, seven is fate, and so on — but zero through four are sufficient for my intentions in this brief commentary.

From the perspective of the material plane, all living creatures (which is to say, all organic entities capable of at least some consciousness) that are born, breathe rhythmically, reproduce, and eventually die — including humans, all other life forms on earth, and probably Gaia herself — embody specific but limited perspectives that differ from those of other creatures. We leave home (Unity) to pursue differentiation, journeying to the metaphorical big city — *How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Parea?* Well, you're not, because the journey is about infinite variation, individuation and relatedness, gradually enlarging perspectives, and the expansion of

consciousness — still limited, of course, but nonetheless bigger than at the start. Eventually, we return home. Some say that happens at death, but others believe that's too soon, that death is not the end of our journey. Either way, when we eventually get back home to re-unify with Ultimate Oneness, we're both changed and yet the same.

In this mythic story-telling, we're a little like scouts who are hired by the wagon train, venturing out into unexplored territory, reporting back to the Wagon Master about the what awaits beyond the known in the territory that lies ahead. In another context, however, we — all of us, every living creature — are the ways that God can know Itself. We are the fun-house of mirrors that display every facet of God back to God.

OK. Put that aside for a moment, and let's go back to the primary division of duality. That's where good and evil kick in.

Duality is not the only division of Unity into differing facets, parts, phases, etc., but it is the initial, most simple and stark procedure. We've all seen videos of fertilized egg cells undergoing the transformation into what will eventually become a complex organism. The very first step is combining the DNA of egg and sperm. After that, a process of cell division begins. The fertilized egg cell, now containing all the information it needs, divides itself into two cells — not three or four or seven. Two then become four, then eight, and so on.

And so it is with human notions of good and evil. Along with all the other dualities, good and evil represent a primary division, the first step away from Unity. Each implies its opposite. If you have one, you've also got the other. Is anyone among us *only* good or *only* evil? That's doubtful, although one may be more visibly manifested as the front, while the other remains in the shadows as the back.

In the myths of certain spiritual traditions, God, as the CEO of Good, needed an angel to become the paragon of Evil. Beelzebub volunteered or was chosen for that role, and thus became the Devil. In most of these stories, the Devil is a Fallen Angel, cast out of Heaven and condemned to rule Hell. In at least one telling of this story, however, Beelzebub is the most honored of all the angels, effectively God's right-hand man, because he takes on the hardest job of all, a kind of suicide mission. Even as he works full-time to seduce us into corrupting our souls, the Devil is doing God's work. He is willing to suffer being hated and reviled, without ever revealing the truth of his own saintly martyrdom, because Evil is necessary for choice and free will. Being programmed for Good is pointless, for it requires no consciousness, no maturity, no autonomy, no integrity. If our lives are truly about fully mirroring God back to God, then Evil has to exist. It's necessary so that, if we as living creatures develop sufficient consciousness and maturity to achieve a modicum of free will, then we can choose Good. At least that's how the story goes.

Before America became a nation near the end of the 18th century, no country had ever been founded with such a fervent and intentional set of high ideals for

the Common Good. Dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of Law — all these are enshrined within American mythology. That's our front.

Our back — the Evil that lurks in our shadow — is actually not hidden at all. It includes greed, genocide, racism, male superiority, cultural parochialism, plus callous disrespect for nature through near-total disregard for non-human creatures (except for pets we own) and the wholesale ravaging of our own continent and indeed the entire planet. Add to that a nuclear arsenal capable of ending civilization, and America looks less than peachy keen.

I'm not suggesting that America's ideals and aspirations are false. They're not. Nor am I suggesting that our shadow of evil is the bottom-line truth about us. I'm saying that both exist. Our extreme, persistent attachment to our goodness, however, seems to me a form of narcissism that causes us to minimize our shadow, and too often to overlook it entirely.

For more than two centuries, we've been telling ourselves that America is the Shining City on the Hill, the one truly indispensable nation — land of the free and home of the brave. We also tell ourselves that Americans as a people are always and invariably the Good Guys. And sometimes we have been. Even further, we've tended to believe in the superiority of our culture and way of life. Our insistence on these myths reached its apex in the mid-20th century after World War II, but our attachment to this one-sided view has continued to this day, despite ample evidence to the contrary. The more we cling to those myths of our Goodness, however, the more vulnerable we are to acting out its opposite. And that, too, has occurred in great measure.

Over my lifetime of 70 years, I've watched as America struggled mightily to deny its own shadow of evil. For some Americans, this means accepting our imperfection, but believing that our goodness outweighs our evil. For others, though, it means continuing to believe unquestioningly in our goodness (and their own), while succumbing to the shadow.

To my way of thinking, Donald Trump is the embodiment in a single individual of America's evil shadow. I find nothing in his behavior that confirms America's goodness. Everything Trump touches seems to become corrupted toward evil.

Is Trump like Beelzebub in the spiritual story I related above? Is he actually God's most honored angel and the instrument of furthering the possibility of consciousness in the universe of living creatures? I can't wrap my head around that one. Maybe I'm not mature or humble enough, or perhaps I'm still too attached to the image of goodness, but seeing Trump as a virtuous soul who has taken on an onerous task is a bridge too far for me.

I do think, however, that ridding ourselves of our own evil requires much more than merely removing Donald Trump from high office or banishing him from the public stage. He is the avatar for a much deeper and more entrenched evil. Whenever and however Trump is defeated and fades into history, we will still have to deal with America's shadow, which is in all of us.