

## **Persona & Shadow**

The persona and the shadow are archetypal components of the psyche which play specific roles in the psychic development and social adjustment of everyone. Jung saw that the persona functions as mediator between the outer world and the ego; it takes its form and function from its outward, collective reality. The shadow is shaped by personal factors and also by the unconscious of the culture and family in which a person grows up.

### **Persona**

“...that which in reality one is not,  
but which oneself – as well as others – think one is.”  
(Jung, CW9i, para. 221)

Just as every building has a façade so every personality has a persona. Through the persona we codify ourselves in a form which we hope will prove acceptable to others. It has sometimes been referred to as the social archetype or the conformity archetype, for on it depends the success or failure of one’s adaptation to society. There is always some element of pretense about the persona, for it is a kind of shop window in which we like to display our best wares; or one might think of it as a public relations expert employed by the ego to ensure that people will think well of us. ‘One could say, with a little exaggeration, that the persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is’ (CW9i, para. 221).

Lifted from *Jung: A Very Short Introduction* by Anthony Stevens, pp. 63-64

Usually made up of ideal aspects of ourselves, the “I” is the persona that we present to the outside world. ‘The persona is . . . a functional complex that comes into existence for reasons of adaptation or personal convenience’ (CW6, para. 801).

Originally the word persona meant a mask worn by actors to indicate the role they played. On this level, it is both a protective covering and an asset in mixing with other people. Civilized society depends on interactions between people through the persona.

There are indeed people who lack a developed persona . . . blundering from one social solecism to the next, perfectly harmless and innocent, soulful bores or appealing children, or, if they are women, spectral Cassandras dreaded for their tactlessness, eternally misunderstood, never knowing what they are about, always taking forgiveness for granted, blind to the world, hopeless dreamers. From them we can see how a neglected persona works. (CW7, para. 318)

Before the persona has been differentiated from the ego, the persona is experienced as individuality. In fact, as a social identity on the one hand and an ideal image on the other, there is little individual about it.

It is, as its name implies, only a mask of the collective psyche, a mask that feigns individuality, making others and oneself believe that one is individual, whereas one is simply acting a role through which the collective psyche speaks.

When we analyse the persona we strip off the mask, and discover that what seemed to be individual is at bottom collective; in other words, that the persona was only a mask of the collective psyche. Fundamentally the persona is nothing real: it is a compromise between individual and society as to what a man should appear to be. He takes a name, earns a title, exercises a function, he is this or that. In a certain sense all this is real, yet in relation to the essential individuality of the person concerned it is only a secondary reality, a compromise formation, in making which others often have a greater share than he. (CW7, paras. 245f)

A psychological understanding of the persona as a function of relationship to the outside world makes it possible to consciously assume a persona and also to drop it at will. But by rewarding a particular persona, the outside world invites identification with it. Money, respect and power come to those who can perform single-mindedly and well in a social role. From being a useful convenience, therefore, the persona may become a trap and a source of neurosis.

Among the consequences of identifying with a persona are:

- we lose sight of who we are without a protective covering;
- our reactions are predetermined by collective expectations (we do and think and feel what our persona "should" do, think and feel);
- those close to us complain of our emotional distance;
- and we cannot imagine life without it.

To the extent that ego-consciousness is identified with the persona, the neglected inner life (personified in the shadow and anima or animus) is activated in compensation. The consequences, experienced in symptoms characteristic of neurosis, can stimulate the process of individuation.

Lifted from *Jung Lexicon* by Daryl Sharp, pp. 97-99

Jolande Jacobi, an analysand of Jung's and later an analyst herself, points out that a properly functioning persona must take into account three factors:

- first, the ego-ideal or wish image which every human being carries within him and on which he would like to model his nature and behavior,
- second, his particular environment's view of an individual "after its own heart,"
- and third, the physical and psychic contingencies which limit the realization of these ideals.

If one or even two of these factors is left out of account, as sometimes happens, the persona cannot do justice to its task; it becomes more of a hindrance than a help to the development of the personality. An individual whose persona is built up exclusively of traits approved by the external collectivity will have the persona of a mass man; while the individual who takes only his wish-image into account and neglects the other two factors will show the persona of an eccentric or even a rebel. Thus the persona involves not only psychic qualities but also forms of social behavior and our habits of personal appearance, posture, gait, dress, facial expression, the quality of our smile and our frown, even our way of wearing our hair.

In an individual well adjusted to his environment and his own inner life, the persona is merely a supple protective coating that makes for easy, natural relations with the outside world.

Lifted from *The Psychology of C. G. Jung* by Jolande Jacobi p. 28

The persona begins to form early in childhood out of a need to conform to the wishes and expectations of parents, peers, and teachers. Children quickly learn that certain attitudes and behaviours are acceptable and may be rewarded with approval while others are unacceptable and may result in punishment or the withdrawal of love. The tendency is to build acceptable traits into the persona and to keep unacceptable traits hidden or repressed. These socially undesirable aspects of the maturing personality are usually relegated to the personal unconscious, where they coalesce to form another complex, or part personality, which Jung called the shadow.

### Shadow

“...the thing a person has no wish to be...”

(Jung, CW16, para. 470)

One's shadow consists of hidden or unconscious aspects of oneself, both good and bad, which the ego has either repressed or never recognized.

If it has been believed hitherto that the human shadow was the source of all evil, it can now be ascertained on closer investigation that the unconscious man, that is, his shadow, does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses, etc.' (CW9ii, para. 423)

The shadow is composed for the most part of repressed desires and uncivilized impulses, morally inferior motives, childish fantasies and resentments – all those things about oneself that one is not proud of. These unacknowledged personal characteristics are often experienced in others through the mechanism of projection.

Although, with insight and good will, the shadow can to some extent be assimilated into the conscious personality, experience shows that there are certain features which offer the most obstinate resistance to moral control and prove almost impossible to influence. These resistances are usually bound up with projections, which are not recognized as such, and their recognition is a moral achievement beyond the ordinary. While some traits peculiar to the shadow can be recognized without too much difficulty as one's personal qualities, in this case both insight and good will are unavailing because the cause of the emotion appears to lie, beyond all possibility of doubt, in the other person. (CW9ii, para. 16)

The realization of the shadow is inhibited by the persona. To the degree that we identify with a bright persona, the shadow is correspondingly dark. Thus shadow and persona stand in a compensatory relationship, and the conflict between them is invariably present in an outbreak of neurosis. The characteristic depression at such times indicates the need to realize that one is not all one pretends or wishes to be.

'The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real' (CW9ii, para. 14).

Responsibility for the shadow rests with the ego. That is why the shadow is a moral problem. It is one thing to realize what it looks like – what we are capable of. It is quite something else to determine what we can live out, or live with.

The shadow is not, however, only the dark underside of the personality. It also consists of instincts, abilities and positive moral qualities that have long been buried or never been conscious. ‘The shadow is merely somewhat inferior, primitive, unadapted, and awkward; not wholly bad. It even contains childish or primitive qualities which would in a way vitalize and embellish human existence, but – convention forbids!’ (CW11, para. 134)

Lifted from *Jung Lexicon* by Daryl Sharp, pp. 123-125

Confronting one’s shadow is difficult. This is not surprising since the whole shadow complex is tinged with feelings of guilt and unworthiness, and with fears of rejection should its true nature be discovered or exposed. However painful the process may be, it is necessary to persevere because much Self potential and instinctive energy is locked away in the shadow and therefore unavailable to the total personality.

People suffering from this inner state of Self-division commonly complain of feeling flat and listless, and that life has become meaningless for them. Success in making the shadow conscious and coming to terms with its contents results, after the initial struggle, in a sense of greater vitality, of feeling more vigorous, more creative, and more whole. To own one’s shadow is to become responsible for it, so that one’s morality is less blind and less compulsive, and ethical choices become possible. Shadow consciousness is important not only for personal development, therefore, but as a basis for greater social harmony and international understanding.

Lifted from *Jung: A Very Short Introduction* by Anthony Stevens pp. 63-67

While the shadow’s close relationship to the ego may facilitate its integration into consciousness, true knowledge of the shadow is a task never fully completed. As an archetypal figure, the shadow is not actually a problem to be solved but rather an inner entity to be explored, known, and recognized as a part of ourselves.