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The Sacred Paradox of Healing: Integrating Shadow and Light in Medicine, Politics, and Spirituality through Jungian and Kabbalistic Wisdom

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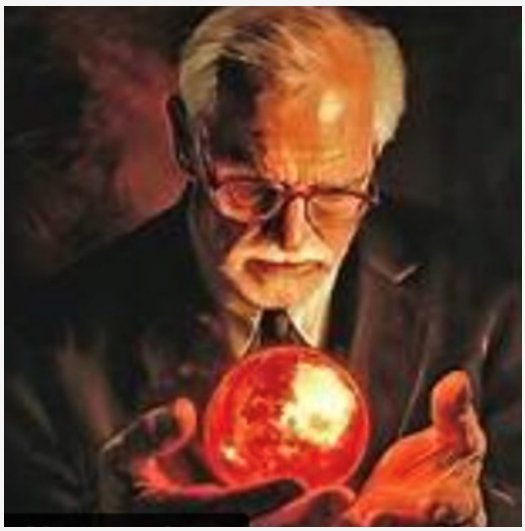

Abstract

This work proposes a revolutionary therapeutic framework that integrates Carl Jung's shadow psychology with both orthodox and heretical streams of Kabbalistic thought to address the fundamental presence of evil and suffering in illness and existence. Drawing upon the scholarship of modern scholars, this study demonstrates how Jung's recognition that Kabbalistic writings "anticipated my entire psychology" opens pathways for therapeutic approaches that can hold the tension between light and dark, creation and destruction, presence and absence.

The theoretical foundation rests upon the Lurianic Kabbalistic insight that divine light becomes trapped within kelipot (shells of evil) through the cosmic catastrophe of Shevirat HaKelim (Breaking of the Vessels), paralleling Jung's understanding that rejected shadow material contains essential life energy requiring integration rather than elimination.

The concept of tzimtzum (divine contraction) provides a framework for therapeutic spaces that can hold both divine presence and absence, while heretical movements like Sabbateanism and Frankism reveal how "redemption through sin" anticipates contemporary insights about the necessity of engaging rather than avoiding difficult psychological material. The controversial figure of Jonathan Eybeschutz, accused by Jacob Emden of harboring secret Sabbatean beliefs while maintaining orthodox authority, exemplifies the profound tension between orthodox containment and heretical breakthrough that characterizes both authentic mystical development and therapeutic transformation (Ungar-Sargon, 2025).

Clinical applications demonstrate how therapeutic encounters can become sacred containers for the coincidence of opposites (coincidentia oppositorum), allowing both healer and patient to recognize divine sparks hidden within psychological suffering. This approach transforms symptoms from pathology to be eliminated into sacred texts requiring hermeneutical sophistication, moving beyond conventional models that split healing and wounding, light and dark, therapist and patient.

The framework extends to collective healing, revealing how individual shadow integration creates immunity to political manipulation through projection and scapegoating. Analysis of war and peace through this lens demonstrates how collective shadow projection creates "political kelipot" that imprison the divine sparks present in designated enemies, while conscious resistance based on tikkun olam (repairing the world) offers pathways for transforming rather than perpetuating cycles of violence.

Elie Wiesel's testimony about maintaining faith through ultimate darkness provides a model for therapeutic work that can hold the "tragedy of the believer"—remaining open to sacred encounter even within experiences of divine absence. The integration of personal healing with cosmic repair suggests that therapeutic practice becomes a form of political action, creating possibilities for what Hillman terms "archetypal democracy" based on conscious relationship to collective energies.

This synthesis offers hope for therapeutic approaches capable of addressing the fundamental spiritual dimensions of suffering while maintaining clinical sophistication, suggesting that the integration of ancient wisdom with contemporary psychology may be essential for healing the individual and collective wounds of our time.

Keywords: Shadow work, Kabbalah, Jung, therapeutic space, evil, suffering, *kelipot, tzimtzum,* tikkun olam, archetypal psychology, heretical mysticism, Sabbateanism, collective trauma, political shadow, war and peace, divine concealment, coincidentia oppositorum.

Introduction: The Paradox of Healing Through Darkness

The therapeutic encounter stands at the intersection of profound mysteries—where healing emerges from confronting suffering, where light is found hidden within darkness, and where the very act of creation requires destruction. This exploration emerges from my struggles with the intersection of spirituality and pain management, opening crucial dialogue about how we understand the presence of evil and suffering not merely in illness, but in the fundamental fabric of existence and the healing process itself (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). "The Absent Healer" explores how therapeutic presence sometimes requires therapeutic absence, while his work on "Sacred and Profane Space in the Therapeutic Encounter" demonstrates the necessity of moving beyond rigid distinctions to hold the full spectrum of human experience (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). My reflections on divine presence and concealment in therapeutic space provide groundwork for understanding how ancient wisdom can inform contemporary healing practices (Ungar-Sargon, 2025; Ungar-Sargon, 2025).

Drawing upon Carl Jung's revolutionary concept of the shadow—those aspects of ourselves we reject, deny, or hide—and its profound resonance with both orthodox and heretical streams of Kabbalistic thought, this work proposes a therapeutic framework capable of holding the fundamental tensions between light and dark, creation and destruction, good and evil. The question that emerges transcends simple approaches to healing: not how to eliminate suffering, but how to create therapeutic spaces that can hold the tension between opposing forces in ways that facilitate genuine transformation.

The theoretical foundation for this integration draws extensively upon the scholarship of Sanford Drob, whose groundbreaking work in Kabbalistic Visions: C.G. Jung and Jewish Mysticism demonstrates that Jung's 1944 Kabbalistic visions represented "the most tremendous things" he had ever experienced, including his identification with "Rabbi Simon ben Jochai," the presumed author of the Zohar (Drob, 2023). Elliot Wolfson's hermeneutical phenomenology of Jewish mysticism provides crucial methodological insights into the nature of concealment and revelation, (Wolfson, 2005) while Gershom Scholem's foundational scholarship establishes the historical and phenomenological framework for understanding mystical transformation (Scholem, 1941). Moshe Idel's phenomenological approach to Kabbalah offers essential correctives to purely historical approaches, (Idel, 1988) and James Hillman's archetypal psychology provides a psychological framework that honors the multiple personifications of psyche without reducing them to mere pathology (Hillman, 1975). Michael Fishbane's hermeneutical theology bridges ancient wisdom and contemporary spiritual seeking, (Fishbane, 2008) while Elie Wiesel's confrontation with absolute evil offers profound testimony to the human capacity to find meaning within meaninglessness (Wiesel, 2006).

The Jungian Shadow: Embracing the Rejected Self

Jung's excitement about Kabbalistic writings is well documented. As Drob notes, Jung claimed that the writings of the Maggid of Mezhirech "anticipated my entire psychology in the eighteenth century" (Drob, 2023). This recognition points to fundamental parallels between Jung's understanding of the psyche and mystical Jewish thought, particularly around the necessity of confronting rather than avoiding dark material. Jung's assertion that "one does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious" challenges conventional therapeutic approaches that seek only to eliminate symptoms rather than integrate them (Jung, 1989).

The shadow in Jungian psychology represents what Jung called "the dark, inaccessible part of our personality" that contains not only personal repressed material but also "the shadow of society... fed by the neglected and repressed collective values" (Jung, 1969). This understanding becomes crucial when applied to therapeutic spaces, where both healer and patient carry shadows that inevitably enter the encounter. The failure to recognize this dynamic can lead to what Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig termed the perversion of the Wounded-Healer archetype, where the therapeutic relationship becomes

split into "healed therapist" and "wounded patient," extracting healing potential from the patient and creating dependency rather than empowerment (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1971).

Hillman's archetypal psychology radically extends Jung's insights by suggesting that the shadow must not be "integrated" by the ego but rather allowed to find its proper place within the polytheistic landscape of the psyche. As Hillman argues, "It is within these tandems that shadow can be integrated, not by us, but into them" (Hillman, 1983). This approach recognizes that different aspects of shadow material may belong to different archetypal configurations—the shadow of power belongs to Zeus, the shadow of love to Aphrodite, the shadow of wisdom to Athena. Such differentiation prevents the ego from taking on the impossible task of containing all shadow material while honoring the specific quality and intelligence of each archetypal realm.

The therapeutic implications of this understanding are profound. Rather than approaching shadow work as a heroic task of ego-integration, the therapeutic space becomes a polytheistic sanctuary where different "gods and goddesses" (different drives) can receive their due worship, including their shadow aspects. This approach resonates deeply with Kabbalistic understanding of the sefirot (both the light and the dark side) as differentiated aspects of divine manifestation, each requiring specific forms of service and recognition.

Sacred Contradiction

Traditional Kabbalistic thought in its Lurianic formulation, offers a cosmological framework that remarkably parallels Jung's insights about shadow integration. According to Rabbi Isaac Luria's cosmology, the universe came into being when God poured infinite light into ten sefirot (vessels), causing them to shatter—a catastrophic event known as *Shevirat HaKelim* (the Breaking of the Vessels). Scholem demonstrates that this cosmic catastrophe is not viewed as a mistake or failure, but as a necessary stage in creation itself (Scholem, 1941).

The shards of the broken vessels, known as the kelipot, represent what Drob describes as "malevolent constrictions in being, which, according to the Kabbalah, are the source of evil and personal suffering " (Drob, 2023). Yet these shells of evil contain within themselves the divine light they have captured. Critically, evil has no independent existence—as Drob explains, the kelipot are "vacuous apparitions sustained in their seeming existence only by the divine light that they have captured " (Drob, 2023). Evil thus becomes parasitic upon the very goodness it appears to oppose, a formulation that prefigures Jung's understanding of the shadow as containing rejected aspects of the Self (Jung, 1989).

The concept of *tzimtzum* (divine contraction) adds another crucial dimension to this understanding. God began creation by contracting the infinite light to create a "vacant space" (*ḥalal hapanuy*) in which finite realms could exist (Wolfson, 2005). This theological move suggests that creation itself requires a form of divine withdrawal, limitation, even apparent absence—creating space for both existence and the experience of suffering.

Wolfson's analysis reveals the hermeneutical sophistication of this Kabbalistic insight: "The tzimtzum results in the paradox of simultaneous divine presence and absence within the vacuum and resultant Creation" (Wolfson, 2005). This paradox becomes foundational for therapeutic work, suggesting that healing spaces must be capable of holding both presence and absence, both the divine light of healing potential and the kelipot of suffering and shadow material.

In therapeutic terms, this points toward the necessity of creating what might be called a therapeutic *tzimtzum*—a sacred contraction that makes space for the emergence of both light and dark materials. The therapeutic space becomes a microcosm of the cosmic process described in Kabbalah, where healing emerges not through the elimination of darkness but through its proper containment and transformation. Our "The Tzimtzum Model and Doctor-Patient Relationships" provides clinical application of this Kabbalistic insight, demonstrating how therapeutic relationships can embody the cosmic dynamic of divine contraction and expansion (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). "Sacred and Profane Space in the Therapeutic Encounter" suggests that such spaces must move beyond rigid distinctions to hold the full spectrum of human experience (Ungar-Sargon, 2025).

Idel's approach to Kabbalah provides crucial insights into how this cosmological drama translates into lived spiritual practice. His work on ecstatic Kabbalah demonstrates that mystical experience involves not transcending the world of *kelipot* but learning to navigate it with wisdom and discrimination (Idel, 1988). The mystic must learn to extract the holy sparks trapped within the shells of apparent evil without being contaminated by the shells themselves. This process parallels shadow work in Jungian therapy, where the goal is not to eliminate shadow material but to relate to it in ways that free its trapped energy without being possessed by its destructive potential.

Heretical Transformation

The controversial figure of Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz (1690-1764) provides a crucial case study for understanding how the tension between orthodox authority and heretical transformation operates in both religious and therapeutic contexts. R. Eybeschutz, was accused of harboring secret Sabbatean beliefs while maintaining public orthodox authority—an accusation that generated one of the most bitter controversies in modern Jewish history (Maciejko, 2024; Emden & Eybeschutz, 2025).

Recent scholarship supports the contention that his amulets contained Sabbatean allusions (Emden & Eybeschutz, 2025). Yet Eybeschutz simultaneously served as a pillar of orthodox authority, joining the Prague rabbinate in excommunicating Sabbateans while allegedly maintaining heretical beliefs in private (Eybeschutz, 2025). This apparent contradiction reveals a sophisticated understanding of how transformative spiritual work often requires operating simultaneously within and beyond conventional religious frameworks.

The Eybeschutz paradigm illuminates a crucial dynamic in therapeutic work: the necessity of maintaining sufficient credibility to create safe containers while simultaneously engaging insights that challenge conventional assumptions about healing and pathology. Like Eybeschutz, effective therapists must often operate as what might be called "orthodox heretics"—maintaining professional legitimacy while drawing upon wisdom traditions that exceed the boundaries of conventional practice.

Pawel Maciejko's recent research suggests that Eybeschutz represented a form of "heretical mysticism" that was "unlike anything else" in Jewish history—neither fully orthodox nor conventionally Sabbatean but rather a unique synthesis that transcended existing categories (Maciejko, 2024). This position parallels the therapeutic challenge of working with patients whose suffering exceeds conventional diagnostic categories and requires forms of engagement that transcend standard treatment protocols.

This fierce controversy reveals the threat that such boundary-crossing figures pose to established religious and professional hierarchies (Maciejko, 2024). Yet it also demonstrates the necessity of such figures for facilitating authentic transformation. Without individuals willing to risk their orthodox credentials by engaging heretical insights, spiritual and therapeutic traditions become rigid and lose their transformative power.

Scholem's analysis of the Eybeschutz controversy suggests that it served the historical function of "crushing the lingering belief in Sabbatai current even in some Orthodox circles "(Scholem, 1973). The price of this victory, however, was the suppression of mystical currents that carried essential wisdom about the relationship between sacred and shadow. The therapeutic application of this insight suggests that conventional approaches to mental health may have achieved stability at the cost of eliminating transformative possibilities that require engagement with shadow material.

The heretical streams of Kabbalah—particularly Sabbateanism and Frankism—pushed the logic of orthodox mysticism to radical conclusions that eerily anticipate both Jungian shadow work and contemporary therapeutic insights about the necessity of confronting rather than avoiding difficult material. Scholem's research into these movements reveals theological innovations that remain disturbing even to contemporary scholarship (Scholem, 1941).

In these heretical frameworks, transgression or sin itself is viewed as a spiritual necessity, capable of unleashing hidden divine sparks trapped in impure realms. Jacob Frank, the eighteenth-century mystical teacher, claimed that "all laws and teachings will fall," asserting that the most important obligation of humanity was the transgression of every boundary (Maciejko, 2011). Sabbateans argued that their leader's apostasy was a form of sacred "descension into the kelipot" (shells of impurity), a necessary evil to elevate the sparks of holiness according to Lurianic Kabbalah (Scholem, 1973).

While these movements were widely condemned as heretical, they reveal something profound about the relationship between shadow integration and spiritual development. The heretical insight that transformation requires willingness to descend into the very darkness one fears parallels Jung's understanding that "the shadow may also contain a number of qualities and potentials that can help round out our character and personality "(Jung, 1969). Frank's notorious doctrine of "redemption through sin" intuited that genuine transformation cannot occur through moral perfectionism but requires engagement with the rejected aspects of existence (Maciejko, 2011).

Wolfson's analysis of antinomian currents in Jewish mysticism reveals the theological sophistication underlying these apparently scandalous practices. The transgression of boundaries serves not as mere libertinism but as a form of mystical practice aimed at liberating divine sparks from their imprisonment in the realm of appearances (Wolfson, 2005). This theological insight resonates with Hillman's critique of conventional morality in psychological work. Hillman argues that authentic soul-making sometimes requires what he calls "the courage of the pathological"—the willingness to enter into experiences that conventional consciousness labels as sick or wrong (Hillman, 1983).

The therapeutic implications of this heretical wisdom are complex and require careful discrimination. ***The point is not to advocate for literal transgression*** but to recognize that authentic healing sometimes requires crossing the boundaries of conventional "goodness" or "health." This might mean allowing anger in therapy, expressing forbidden desires, or acknowledging thoughts and feelings that contradict one's spiritual or ethical ideals. The therapeutic space becomes a place where such "transgressions" can occur safely, allowing the trapped sparks of vitality to be liberated without causing harm to self or others.

Fishbane's hermeneutical theology provides a framework for understanding how this ancient wisdom can be appropriated in contemporary context. His emphasis on the "exegetical imagination" suggests ways of reading traditional texts that honor their transformative power while adapting their insights to contemporary needs (Fishbane, 2008). The Kabbalists' insight that redemption requires descent into darkness can be understood not as literal instruction but as mythic wisdom about the necessity of engaging shadow material in any authentic spiritual or therapeutic process.

The Therapeutic Space as Sacred Container

Drawing from both Jungian psychology and Kabbalistic thought, we can envision the therapeutic space as a sacred container capable of holding the fundamental tensions of existence. This space must be able to accommodate what Wolfson calls the "coincidentia oppositorum"—the coincidence of opposites that characterizes both mystical experience and psychological transformation (Wolfson, 2005).

In "The Absent Healer" and "Divine Presence and Concealment in the Therapeutic Space" I suggested that therapeutic presence sometimes requires therapeutic absence—the wisdom to know when not to intervene, when to allow suffering to reveal its own meaning (Ungar-Sargon, 2025; Ungar-Sargon, 2025). In "Revelation in Concealment" I suggested that divine light is often revealed through its concealment, paralleling the therapeutic dynamic where healing emerges through apparent absence of the healer (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). This parallels the Kabbalistic understanding that divine light is often revealed through its concealment. As Drob notes in his analysis of Jung's Kabbalistic visions, "the more pronounced the concealment, the more profound the disclosure"(Drob, 2023).

The therapeutic relationship thus mirrors the cosmic dynamic described in Lurianic Kabbalah, where God's presence is most powerfully felt through apparent absence. The therapist's willingness to step back, to create space for the patient's own healing wisdom to emerge, paradoxically makes possible a deeper form of therapeutic presence. This requires what might be called therapeutic *tzimtzum*—a sacred contraction that creates space for the emergence of new possibilities.

Wiesel's profound meditation on divine silence in the face of ultimate evil provides a crucial counterpoint to any facile spiritualization of therapeutic absence. His famous assertion that "God is not silent. God is silence" points toward a form of presence that transcends conventional categories of activity and passivity (Wiesel, 2006). In therapeutic terms, this suggests that the most profound healing may occur not through intervention but through the quality of presence the therapist brings to the encounter with suffering.

The Integration of Light and Dark

Rather than positioning itself only on the side of health against illness, light against dark, the therapeutic space must be able to hold both polarities without premature resolution. The Kabbalah's assertion that evil is the source of good, confirmed by Jung's observation that "where there is no shadow, there is no light," suggests that symptoms, suffering, and even destructive impulses contain within them the very energy needed for transformation (Jung, 1989).

Hillman's archetypal psychology provides a sophisticated framework for working with this insight. Rather than viewing pathology as something to be eliminated, archetypal psychology sees psychological symptoms as expressions of archetypal energies seeking recognition and proper worship. Depression may be an invitation into the underworld of Hades, anxiety an expression of Hermes' restless movement, rage a manifestation of Ares' warrior spirit. The therapeutic task becomes one of learning to relate to these energies in ways that honor their archetypal intelligence while preventing their destructive manifestation (Hillman, 1983).

This approach resonates with Idel's analysis of Kabbalistic practice, which emphasizes the importance of discriminating between different levels of experience. The mystic must learn to distinguish between the divine sparks trapped within the kelipot and the shells themselves (Idel, 1988). Similarly, the therapist and patient must learn to distinguish between the archetypal intelligence expressing itself through symptoms and the destructive patterns that may surround that intelligence.

Fishbane's work on Jewish hermeneutics provides insight into how this transgressive wisdom can be integrated into contemporary therapeutic practice. His emphasis on the multiple levels of textual interpretation—peshat (literal), remez (allegorical), derash (homiletical), and sod (mystical)—suggests that therapeutic "texts" (symptoms, dreams, life events) can be read at multiple levels simultaneously (Fishbane, 2008). What appears destructive at the literal level may reveal healing wisdom at the mystical level.

The therapeutic space thus becomes what Fishbane calls an "exegetical sanctuary"—a place where the texts of human experience can be read with the sophistication they deserve (Fishbane, 2008). This requires what Wolfson terms "hermeneutical sensitivity" to the multiple layers of meaning present in any psychological phenomenon (Wolfson, 2005). A symptom is never just a symptom but a complex text requiring careful interpretation across multiple levels of significance.

Evil, Suffering, and the Creative-Destructive Process

The presence of evil and suffering in the world—and in illness—cannot be adequately addressed by therapeutic approaches that seek only to eliminate or overcome these forces. Both Jungian psychology and Kabbalistic thought suggest that evil and suffering serve essential functions in the cosmic and psychological economy.

The tzimtzum results in the space in which spiritual and physical worlds and, ultimately, free will exist. Similarly, illness often creates the space in which previously impossible forms of healing, growth, and consciousness can emerge. The destruction of old patterns, identities, and ways of being is often prerequisite to authentic transformation.

Hillman's critique of the "growth" paradigm in psychology provides valuable insight into this dynamic. Rather than viewing psychological development as continuous expansion, Hillman suggests that authentic development requires periods of contraction, descent, and even death. His famous assertion that "growth is cancer" points toward the recognition that healthy development includes cycles of expansion and contraction, building up and breaking down (Hillman, 1983).

This insight resonates with Scholem's analysis of the mystical life, which involves alternating periods of ascent and descent, revelation and concealment (Scholem, 1941). The mystic cannot remain permanently in states of expanded consciousness but must return to ordinary awareness, integrate insights gained in mystical states, and prepare for further spiritual work. Similarly, the therapeutic process involves cycles of opening and closing, remembering and forgetting, integration and disintegration.

Our clinical work on the therapeutic encounter with chronic pain may provide insight into how this cosmic pattern manifests in actual healing work. We find that chronic pain often serves as what I call a "spiritual teacher," forcing patients to develop new relationships to their bodies, their limitations, and their mortality (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). His innovative "Healing Space for Caregiver and Patient" model integrates holistic healing principles that honor both the creative and destructive aspects of the healing process (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). The pain itself becomes a form of therapeutic tzimtzum, creating space for forms of wisdom and compassion that might not otherwise emerge, as detailed in his work on "The Tzimtzum Model and Doctor-Patient Relationships " (Ungar-Sargon, 2025).

The Parasitic Nature of Evil

The Kabbalistic insight that kelipot are "vacuous apparitions sustained in their seeming existence only by the divine light that they have captured" suggests that what we experience as evil or suffering has no independent existence (Drob, 2023). It lives parasitically off life force itself. In therapeutic terms, this means that symptoms and pathology often represent life energy that has become trapped or misdirected rather than genuinely malevolent forces that must be destroyed.

Hillman's archetypal approach provides a sophisticated framework for working with this insight. Rather than viewing psychological symptoms as pathology to be eliminated, archetypal psychology sees symptoms as expressions of archetypal energies that have become trapped in literal, ego-centered interpretations (Hillman, 1983). The therapeutic task becomes one of helping these energies find more appropriate and creative forms of expression.

This approach is exemplified in Hillman's work with depression, which he reframes not as a chemical imbalance to be corrected but as a descent into the underworld that may be necessary for soul-making. Depression may be the psyche's way of forcing a necessary confrontation with mortality, limitation, and the deeper sources of meaning. The therapeutic task becomes one of learning to inhabit the depressive experience with dignity and discrimination rather than simply trying to escape from it (Hillman, 1983).

The Hidden Sparks in Suffering

The Kabbalistic insight that divine sparks are hidden within the kelipot suggests that our most difficult experiences often contain our greatest potential for growth and healing. This insight receives powerful confirmation in Wiesel's testimony about finding meaning within the absolute meaninglessness of the Holocaust. As he writes, "If we don't acknowledge and pay our dues to the darkness, it will take its due on its own terms—like the return of the Freudian repressed—with a vengeance " (Wiesel, 2006).

Wiesel's confrontation with ultimate evil provides crucial insight into the therapeutic encounter with suffering. His refusal to abandon faith despite—or perhaps because of—his experience of divine absence points toward a form of spiritual maturity that can hold contradictions without premature resolution. As he puts it, "I never divorced God. It is because I believed in God that I was angry at God, and still am. The tragedy of the believer, it is deeper than the tragedy of the non-believer "(Wiesel, 2006).

This testimony provides a model for therapeutic work with patients who have experienced severe trauma or loss. Rather than trying to restore simple faith or optimism, the therapeutic task may be to help patients develop the capacity to live with fundamental questions and contradictions. This requires what Wiesel calls "the courage of the question"—the willingness to keep asking difficult questions even when answers are not forthcoming (Wiesel, 2006).

Fishbane's hermeneutical theology provides a framework for understanding how this questioning stance can become a form of spiritual practice. His emphasis on interpretation as an ongoing process rather than a search for final answers suggests that the therapeutic process itself can become a form of sacred study (Fishbane, 2008). Patient and therapist together become students of the text of suffering, seeking not to resolve its contradictions but to read it with ever-greater sophistication and wisdom.

The horrors of human history—genocide, war, oppression—cannot be separated from individual healing work. Jung's recognition that failure to acknowledge shadow elements "is often the root of problems between individuals and within groups and organizations" and "can spark off anything between an interpersonal row and a major war" makes clear that therapeutic work necessarily involves engagement with collective as well as personal shadow material (Jung, 1969).

Recognition of Systemic Shadow

Individual symptoms often carry the weight of collective trauma and systemic dysfunction. Therapeutic work that ignores these larger contexts risks re-traumatizing patients by implying their suffering is purely personal rather than also systemic. Wiesel's testimony about the collective nature of evil provides crucial insight into this dynamic. His observation that "the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference" points toward the recognition that individual pathology often emerges from collective failures of care and attention (Wiesel, 2006).

This insight requires what might be called a "political unconscious" approach to therapeutic work that recognizes how individual symptoms reflect larger social and historical dynamics. A patient's depression may be an appropriate response to living in a depressing social environment. A person's anxiety may reflect realistic assessment of genuine dangers in their community or culture. The therapeutic task becomes one of helping patients distinguish between what belongs to them personally and what belongs to the larger collective field.

Hillman's concept of "soul in the world" provides a framework for this kind of systemic analysis. Rather than viewing

psychological problems as located solely within individuals, Hillman suggests that soul is distributed throughout the cultural and natural environment (Hillman, 1983). Individual symptoms may be expressions of collective shadow material seeking acknowledgment and transformation. This approach prevents both the individualistic fallacy that locates all responsibility within the person and the deterministic fallacy that denies personal agency entirely.

The Wounded Healer Archetype

The character of the Trickster represents what Jung called "a collective shadow figure, a summation of all the inferior traits of character in individuals" whom Jung thought could save us from hubris and free consciousness from rigid patterns (Jung, 1969). This insight has profound implications for therapeutic practice, suggesting that healers must remain connected to their own woundedness and capacity for harm.

Guggenbuhl-Craig's analysis of the shadow of the helping professions reveals the dangers inherent in splitting the therapeutic relationship into "healed helper" and "wounded patient" (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1971). Such splitting projects healing capacity entirely onto the therapist while reducing the patient to passive recipient of care. This dynamic replicates the very patterns of dominance and submission that often contribute to psychological suffering in the first place.

The alternative approach requires what might be called "mutual recognition" of both healing capacity and woundedness in both participants. The therapist's own experience of suffering becomes not something to hide but a source of empathy and wisdom. This does not mean burdening patients with therapist's problems but rather maintaining authentic humanity in the therapeutic relationship.

Wiesel's testimony provides a powerful model for this kind of wounded healing. His willingness to remain vulnerable to the questions raised by his Holocaust experience, rather than retreating into dogmatic answers, allows him to serve as what he calls "a messenger to mankind "(Wiesel, 2006). His healing power emerges not from having transcended suffering but from his willingness to remain present to it without being destroyed by it.

The Therapeutic Paradox

The therapeutic process inevitably involves both creation and destruction. Old patterns must die for new ones to be born. Illusions must be shattered for truth to emerge. Identity structures must be deconstructed for more authentic selfhood to arise. This creative-destructive dynamic parallels the cosmic process described in Lurianic Kabbalah and requires careful attention to timing and pacing.

Scholem's analysis reveals that authentic transformation involves what he calls "destruction that serves construction" (Scholem, 1941). The mystic must be willing to abandon familiar ways of understanding self and world in order to make space for new forms of awareness. This process cannot be rushed or forced but must unfold according to its own inner logic.

Hillman's emphasis on "the soul's code" provides insight into how this process manifests in therapeutic work. Rather than imposing external goals or timelines, the therapeutic process must be allowed to unfold according to what Hillman calls the "acorn pattern"—the unique destiny seeking expression through the individual life (Hillman, 1983). This requires what he calls "archetypal patience"—the willingness to trust the inherent intelligence of the psyche's self-regulating process.

We find in our practice that patients often must grieve the loss of their former healthy identity before they can discover new sources of meaning and purpose (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). In "The Compromised Healer" I explore how moral ambiguity in the physician's role requires navigating the tension between construction and destruction in healing relationships (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). The therapeutic task becomes one of midwifing this process of death and rebirth without trying to control its outcome, as demonstrated in his "Novel Therapeutic Clinic Model Integrating Holistic Healing Principles "(Ungar-Sargon, 2025).

Drawing from this synthesis of Jungian and Kabbalistic insights, several practical implications emerge for therapeutic work that can hold both light and dark, creation and destruction, presence and absence.

Holding Sacred Paradox

Therapeutic spaces must be designed to hold paradox rather than resolve it prematurely. This means creating containers strong enough to hold both love and hate, hope and despair, healing and harming impulses, without rushing to eliminate the "negative" pole. Such spaces require what Wolfson calls "hermeneutical sophistication"—the ability to read multiple layers of meaning simultaneously without collapsing them into simple formulations (Wolfson, 2005).

This requires fundamental shifts in how therapeutic success is understood and measured. Rather than defining success as the elimination of symptoms or the achievement of stable happiness, success might be measured by increased capacity to hold contradictions, to remain present to difficult experiences without being overwhelmed by them, and to find meaning within meaninglessness.

Fishbane's work on the "exegetical imagination" provides a model for this kind of sophisticated interpretation (Fishbane, 2008). Just as traditional Jewish interpretation recognizes multiple valid levels of textual meaning, therapeutic interpretation must be capable of holding multiple perspectives on the same psychological phenomenon. A symptom can simultaneously be understood as pathology requiring treatment, as meaningful communication from the unconscious, as expression of archetypal energy, and as spiritual teaching.

Sometimes healing requires breaking sacred images—of the therapist as all-knowing, of the patient as powerless, of health as the absence of symptoms. Like the heretical Kabbalists, therapeutic work sometimes requires transgressing conventional boundaries of "proper" therapeutic behavior.

This does not mean abandoning professional ethics or therapeutic boundaries but rather maintaining flexibility about how those boundaries are understood and implemented. It may mean acknowledging the limits of therapeutic knowledge, sharing appropriate aspects of therapist's own struggles, or challenging patients' assumptions about what healing looks like.

Hillman's concept of "seeing through" provides a framework for this kind of iconoclastic work (Hillman, 1983). Rather than taking psychological phenomena at face value, archetypal psychology seeks to see through surface appearances to the mythic patterns operating underneath. This approach can be applied to therapeutic assumptions as well, questioning whether conventional ideas about mental health serve soul-making or prevent it.

Recognizing the Divine in Pathology

Rather than viewing symptoms purely as pathology to be eliminated, this approach suggests learning to recognize what might be called "the divine sparks hidden within psychological suffering." This does not mean romanticizing illness but rather developing the capacity to see how symptoms often represent the psyche's attempt to restore balance and wholeness.

Idel's work provides insight into how this recognition might occur (Idel, 1988). The mystic learns to distinguish between the shells of apparent evil and the divine sparks trapped within them. Similarly, the therapist must learn to distinguish between the destructive aspects of psychological symptoms and the intelligence seeking expression through them.

This requires what might be called "archetypal diagnosis"—the ability to recognize which god or goddess is seeking expression through particular symptoms. Depression might be understood as an invitation from Hades to descend into the underworld of soul. Anxiety might be recognized as Hermes seeking to move energy that has become stuck. Rage might be seen as Ares demanding that legitimate boundaries be established and defended.

The therapeutic relationship itself must be strong enough to contain intense material yet flexible enough to be transformed by the process. Like the divine vessels in Kabbalah, therapeutic structures must be willing to break open when they can no longer contain the light that seeks to flow through them.

This requires what might be called "therapeutic tzimtzum"—the willingness to contract therapeutic control in order to make space for patient's own healing wisdom to emerge. It also requires recognition that therapeutic relationships, like all human relationships, are subject to the creative-destructive dynamics that govern all life processes.

Scholem's analysis provides insight into how this dynamic operates (Scholem, 1941). The mystic must be willing to have familiar spiritual practices and understandings shattered when they no longer serve the needs of continued development. Similarly, therapeutic relationships must be allowed to evolve and change as both participants grow and change.

The goal is not to maintain therapeutic relationships indefinitely but to create containers strong enough to hold the necessary work while flexible enough to transform when transformation is called for. This requires what Hillman calls "archetypal imagination"—the ability to envision multiple possible forms for therapeutic relationship based on the archetypal patterns seeking expression (Hillman, 1983).

God's Role in Suffering and Healing

The question of divine involvement in both suffering and healing remains central to therapeutic work with those facing serious illness or trauma. Both orthodox and heretical Kabbalistic traditions suggest that the divine presence is not simply "on the side" of health against illness but is somehow present in and through the entire process of creation, destruction, and recreation.

Our work on "Revelation in Concealment" and "Divine Presence and Concealment in the Therapeutic Space" suggests that divine presence is often most powerfully felt through its apparent absence (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). This paradox receives profound expression in Wiesel's testimony about experiencing God's silence during the Holocaust. His assertion that "God is not silent. God is silence" points toward a form of divine presence that transcends conventional categories of activity and passivity (Wiesel, 2006).

In moments of greatest suffering, when conventional forms of meaning and consolation fail, a deeper level of encounter with the sacred may become possible. This is not a consoling presence that explains away suffering but a mysterious presence that can be encountered within suffering itself. Wolfson's analysis of the tzimtzum provides insight into this paradox: divine presence may be most authentically encountered precisely in experiences of divine absence (Wolfson, 2005).

The therapeutic implications of this insight are profound. Rather than trying to restore simple faith or optimism in the face of suffering, therapeutic work may need to help patients develop capacity for what Wiesel calls "the faith of the question"—the ability to remain faithful to the questioning process even when answers are not forthcoming (Wiesel, 2006). This requires tremendous courage and represents a sophisticated form of spiritual maturity.

The Dialectical Divine

Rather than a God who simply opposes suffering, Kabbalistic thought suggests a dialectical divine presence that includes both creation and destruction, light and darkness, within the divine nature itself. This does not mean that God causes suffering but rather that divine presence can be found within

the full spectrum of human experience, including experiences of evil and suffering.

Drob's analysis of the Kabbalistic understanding of divine attributes reveals a complex picture in which each sefirah contains both constructive and destructive potential (Drob, 2023). The divine quality of Gevurah (strength/judgment) can manifest as either appropriate boundary-setting or destructive harshness. The divine quality of Chesed (lovingkindness) can manifest as either nurturing care or enabling behavior that prevents necessary growth.

This dialectical understanding prevents simplistic splitting of divine attributes into "good" and "bad" categories and suggests instead that divine qualities must be balanced and integrated. In therapeutic terms, this might mean recognizing that authentic care sometimes requires setting firm limits, that genuine compassion sometimes means allowing patients to experience necessary suffering, and that real healing sometimes requires destroying familiar but limiting patterns.

Therapeutic Theosis

The goal of therapeutic work, from this perspective, is not simply symptom relief but what might be called "therapeutic theosis"—becoming more godlike in our capacity to hold paradox, embrace shadow, and find light hidden in darkness. This transformation occurs not through transcending human limitations but through fully embracing them with wisdom and compassion.

Fishbane's concept of "sacred attunement" provides a framework for understanding this process (Fishbane). Rather than seeking to escape human finitude, sacred attunement involves learning to live more fully within human limitations while remaining open to transcendent dimensions of experience. This requires what he calls "hermeneutical humility"—the recognition that human understanding is always partial and provisional while remaining committed to the interpretive task.

The therapeutic relationship becomes a laboratory for practicing this kind of sacred attunement. Both therapist and patient must learn to hold their own and each other's limitations with compassion while remaining open to possibilities for growth and transformation. This requires what might be called "therapeutic hesed"—a quality of loving-kindness that can remain present even in the face of apparent failure or regression.

The integration of shadow work with Kabbalistic wisdom has profound implications for understanding and addressing the collective shadow that manifests in world politics, international relations, and the global crises that characterize our historical moment. The same dynamics that operate in individual psychology and therapeutic relationships also operate at collective levels, often with devastating consequences when shadow material remains unacknowledged and unintegrated.

The Geopolitics of Projection

Jung's insight that unacknowledged shadow material becomes projected onto others operates with particular intensity in international relations (Jung, 1969). Nations, like individuals, tend to see in their enemies those qualities they most fear in themselves. The therapeutic understanding of projection suggests that the qualities we most vehemently condemn in other nations or political groups often represent disowned aspects of our own collective identity.

Wiesel's experience as a witness to genocide provides crucial insight into how collective shadow dynamics can lead to systematic dehumanization and mass violence. His observation that "the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference" points toward the recognition that the greatest political evil often emerges not from active malice but from collective failure to maintain empathic connection with those designated as "other" (Wiesel, 2006).

The Kabbalistic understanding of the kelipot as shells that imprison divine sparks provides a framework for understanding how political demonization operates (Drob, 2023). When we project shadow material onto political enemies, we create what might be called "political kelipot"—rigid categories that imprison the divine sparks present in all human beings and communities. The therapeutic task, translated to the political realm, becomes one of learning to distinguish between the shells of political projection and the divine sparks trapped within them.

This does not mean naive pacifism or failure to recognize genuine evil, but rather a more sophisticated approach to political engagement that can oppose destructive actions while maintaining recognition of the humanity of all participants. Wiesel's testimony about maintaining faith in humanity despite witnessing ultimate evil provides a model for this kind of political wisdom (Wiesel, 2006).

Economic Shadow

The global economic system represents a massive projection of collective shadow material around scarcity, competition, and worth. The Kabbalistic insight that divine abundance is present throughout creation provides a framework for recognizing how economic inequality represents a distortion of divine justice rather than a natural law.

Our suggestions on the intersection of spirituality and healthcare provides clinical insight into how economic forces distort healing relationships (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). Our critique of healthcare systems demonstrates that when healthcare becomes primarily a commodity to be purchased rather than a sacred encounter between human beings, both the healing potential and the spiritual significance of illness become compromised. His research on "Divine Presence in Healing: A Kabbalistic Approach to Compassionate Care" offers alternative models that honor the sacred dimensions of therapeutic encounter (Ungar-Sargon, 2025). In "The Spiritual Space Between Nurse and Patient" this analysis is extended to

all healthcare relationships, showing how economic pressures corrupt the fundamental spiritual dynamics of healing (Ungar-Sargon, 2025).

The theological implications of this distortion are profound. If divine sparks are present in all beings, then economic systems that systematically deprive some people of basic necessities while concentrating vast resources in the hands of others represent a form of collective sin that must be addressed at spiritual as well as political levels.

Hillman's concept of "soul in the world" suggests that economic systems themselves have psychological dimensions that require therapeutic attention (Hillman, 1983). The collective obsession with growth, consumption, and accumulation may represent large-scale manifestations of archetypal energies that have become disconnected from their appropriate objects. The therapeutic task, translated to the economic realm, becomes one of helping collective consciousness find more appropriate ways of relating to power, wealth, and material goods.

Environmental Crisis as Collective Shadow

The global environmental crisis represents a dramatic manifestation of collective shadow projection in human history. The systematic destruction of natural ecosystems reflects a collective inability to acknowledge our fundamental dependence on the natural world and our responsibility for its care.

The Kabbalistic understanding of creation as fundamentally interconnected provides a theological framework for recognizing environmental destruction as a form of collective sin that violates the basic structure of reality. When human beings act as if they are separate from and superior to the natural world, they create what might be called "ecological kelipot"—destructive patterns that imprison the divine sparks present throughout creation.

Wolfson's analysis of divine transcendence and immanence in Kabbalistic thought suggests that authentic spirituality requires recognition of divine presence within the material world rather than transcendence of it (Wolfson, 2005). This theological insight has profound implications for environmental politics, suggesting that ecological healing requires not just policy changes but fundamental shifts in consciousness about the relationship between spirit and matter.

The therapeutic approach to environmental crisis would involve helping collective consciousness recognize and integrate the shadow material that underlies our destructive relationship with the natural world. This might include acknowledging collective greed, fear, and the illusion of separation that drives overconsumption and environmental destruction.

War, Peace, and the Politics of Collective Shadow

The dynamics of war and peace represent perhaps the most dramatic manifestations of collective shadow projection operating at social and political levels. Jung's insight that "failure to recognize, acknowledge and deal with shadow elements is often the root of problems between individuals and within groups and organizations... and can spark off anything between an interpersonal row and a major war" reveals the direct connection between unintegrated psychological material and political violence (Jung, 1969).

In the context of warfare, entire populations become mobilized around the projection of unwanted shadow material onto designated enemies. The enemy becomes the repository for everything a society cannot accept about itself—its capacity for violence, its greed, its fear, its moral compromises. This projection process serves multiple psychological functions: it preserves the group's sense of moral purity, provides a clear target for aggressive impulses, and offers the illusion that evil can be eliminated through military victory.

Wiesel's testimony about the Holocaust provides crucial insight into how this projection process can escalate to genocidal extremes. His observation that "indifference creates evil" points toward the recognition that systematic dehumanization requires not active hatred but the collective withdrawal of empathic recognition (Wiesel, 2006). When shadow projection combines with political indifference to the humanity of designated enemies, the conditions for mass violence become established.

The Kabbalistic understanding of the kelipot provides a theological framework for understanding how war psychology operates (Drob, 2023). When societies create rigid categories of "us" versus "them," they construct what might be called "political kelipot"—shells of ideology that imprison the divine sparks present in all human beings. These shells make it possible to view enemy populations as less than fully human, justifying forms of violence that would be unthinkable if applied to members of one's own group.

Hillman's analysis of the archetypal dimensions of war reveals that warfare serves psychological as well as political functions. The archetype of Ares (Mars) represents the necessary capacity for setting boundaries, defending what is sacred, and confronting genuine threats to community survival (Hillman, 1983). However, when this archetypal energy becomes unconscious and projected, it can manifest as what Hillman calls "archetypal possession"—a state in which entire populations become identified with the warrior archetype in ways that prevent discrimination between necessary and unnecessary violence.

The therapeutic approach to understanding war suggests that lasting peace requires not just political agreements but collective shadow work. Societies must learn to recognize and integrate their own capacity for violence, their own complicity in the conditions that generate conflict, and their own shadow projections onto enemy populations. This does not mean moral relativism or failure to distinguish between aggressor and victim, but rather a more sophisticated understanding of how collective unconscious dynamics contribute to the escalation and perpetuation of conflict.

The Hermeneutics of Peace-Making

Fishbane's work on hermeneutical theology provides insight into how ancient wisdom traditions can inform contemporary peace-making efforts. His emphasis on the multiple levels of textual interpretation—peshat (literal), remez (allegorical), derash (homiletical), and sod (mystical)—suggests that political conflicts must also be read at multiple levels simultaneously (Fishbane, 2008). What appears to be a conflict over territory or resources at the literal level may reveal deeper spiritual and psychological dimensions at mystical levels.

The practice of what might be called "hermeneutical peace-making" would involve helping conflicting parties recognize the multiple layers of meaning present in their disputes. Surface-level disagreements about borders, resources, or political arrangements often mask deeper conflicts about identity, recognition, historical trauma, and spiritual values. Sustainable peace requires addressing all these levels simultaneously rather than focusing only on immediate political issues.

Wolfson's analysis of the relationship between concealment and revelation in Jewish mysticism provides insight into how this hermeneutical approach might operate in practice (Wolfson, 2005). Just as mystical texts reveal their deeper meanings only through careful interpretation that honors both their literal and symbolic dimensions, political conflicts may yield their resolution only through interpretive processes that honor both the immediate practical concerns and the deeper spiritual significance of the disputes.

This approach requires what Fishbane calls "exegetical humility"—the recognition that our understanding of complex conflicts is always partial and provisional while remaining committed to the interpretive task (Fishbane, 2008). Peace-making becomes a form of collective hermeneutics in which all parties must learn to read their own and others' narratives with greater sophistication and empathy.

The Dialectics of Justice and Mercy

The Kabbalistic understanding of divine attributes provides a framework for understanding how societies can balance the competing demands of justice and mercy in addressing conflicts and their aftermath. The sefirah of Gevurah (strength/judgment) represents the divine quality of setting boundaries, maintaining order, and holding individuals and communities accountable for their actions. The sefirah of Chesed (lovingkindness) represents the divine quality of forgiveness, generosity, and unconditional care.

Drob's analysis of these divine attributes reveals that authentic spiritual development requires balancing rather than choosing between justice and mercy (Drob, 2023). Pure justice without mercy becomes cruelty; pure mercy without justice becomes enabling behavior that perpetuates harmful patterns. The challenge for societies emerging from conflict is learning to hold both qualities in dynamic tension rather than splitting them into opposing political positions.

Wiesel's testimony provides a powerful example of how this balance might be maintained in practice. His insistence on remembering the Holocaust—keeping alive the demand for justice—is balanced by his refusal to advocate for revenge against the children and grandchildren of perpetrators (Wiesel, 2006). His anger at God is balanced by his continued faith; his witness to ultimate evil is balanced by his commitment to preventing future genocides regardless of who the potential victims might be.

The therapeutic implications of this insight extend to both individual and collective healing processes. Trauma survivors must learn to hold both their legitimate anger about what was done to them and their need for healing and moving forward. Societies emerging from conflict must learn to balance accountability for past wrongs with the need to build shared futures. This requires what might be called "dialectical consciousness"—the ability to hold contradictory truths simultaneously without premature resolution.

Collective Trauma

The integration of shadow work with Kabbalistic wisdom provides insight into how collective trauma operates across generations and how it contributes to cycles of violence and revenge. Unacknowledged epigenetic collective trauma becomes what might be called "intergenerational kelipot"—shells of unprocessed pain and rage that imprison the divine sparks of entire peoples and pass destructive patterns from one generation to the next.

Mystical traditions preserve and transform traumatic experiences and provide a model for understanding how societies might metabolize collective suffering in ways that serve healing rather than perpetuating cycles of revenge (Scholem, 1941). The mystical response to historical catastrophe involves neither denial nor endless repetition but rather a form of creative interpretation that extracts meaning from meaninglessness and finds sacred purpose within profane suffering.

A phenomenological approach to mystical experience suggests that collective trauma can become a source of spiritual wisdom if it is engaged with appropriate interpretive sophistication (Idel, 1988). The challenge is learning to distinguish between the traumatic shells that perpetuate suffering and the wisdom that can be extracted from traumatic experience. This requires collective practices analogous to individual shadow work—the willingness to face painful historical truths without being overwhelmed by them.

The therapeutic approach to collective trauma suggests that healing requires what might be called "collective witnessing"—creating social spaces where traumatic experiences can be acknowledged, honored, and integrated without being either denied or endlessly repeated. Truth and reconciliation processes represent one attempt to create such spaces, though their success depends on the quality of hermeneutical sophistication brought to the interpretive task.

The Spirituality of Nonviolent Resistance

The integration of Jungian shadow work with Kabbalistic wisdom provides insight into the spiritual dimensions of nonviolent resistance and its role in transforming rather than merely defeating systems of oppression. Hillman's analysis of archetypal energies suggests that the impulse toward justice represents a legitimate archetypal force that requires appropriate expression (Hillman, 1983). The question is not whether to resist injustice but how to resist in ways that serve transformation rather than perpetuating cycles of violence and revenge.

The Kabbalistic concept of tikkun olam (repairing the world) provides a theological framework for understanding nonviolent resistance as a form of cosmic healing. When individuals and communities refuse to participate in systems of oppression, they create what might be called "redemptive kelipot"—forms of resistance that liberate divine sparks from their imprisonment in unjust structures while avoiding the creation of new forms of spiritual contamination.

Wiesel's testimony about maintaining humanity in the face of dehumanizing conditions provides a powerful example of this kind of redemptive resistance. His refusal to let the Holocaust destroy his capacity for love, his insistence on bearing witness without becoming consumed by hatred, represents a form of spiritual resistance that serves healing at both individual and collective levels (Wiesel, 2006). This approach recognizes that the ultimate victory over evil lies not in destroying evil people but in refusing to let evil destroy the human capacity for love and justice.

The therapeutic implications of this insight extend to understanding how individuals and communities can resist systemic oppression without becoming infected by the very qualities they oppose. This requires what might be called "conscious resistance"—the ability to oppose injustice while maintaining awareness of one's own shadow material and avoiding the projection of unwanted qualities onto opponents.

The Hope of Integration

Despite the massive scale of collective shadow material manifesting in contemporary world politics, both Jungian psychology and Kabbalistic thought suggest reasons for hope. Jung's concept of individuation suggests that consciousness can evolve toward greater integration of shadow material, while the Kabbalistic concept of tikkun olam suggests that human beings have both the capacity and the responsibility to participate in cosmic healing.

The integration of personal shadow work with Kabbalistic wisdom suggests that therapeutic practice can become a form of political action. When individuals learn to recognize and integrate their own shadow material, they become less susceptible to political manipulation through projection and scapegoating. When therapeutic spaces learn to hold paradox and complexity, they model forms of dialogue and engagement that could transform political discourse.

Moreover, the practice of shadow integration creates what might be called "immune responses" to collective possession by archetypal forces. Individuals who have learned to recognize and relate consciously to their own capacity for violence, greed, and hatred become less likely to participate unconsciously in collective expressions of these same qualities. They develop what Hillman calls "archetypal consciousness"—the ability to recognize when archetypal energies are seeking expression and to channel them in constructive rather than destructive directions (Hillman, 1983).

The development of such consciousness represents humanity's best hope for breaking cycles of violence and revenge that have characterized much of human history. When sufficient numbers of individuals develop the capacity for conscious relationship to archetypal forces, the possibility emerges for what might be called "archetypal democracy"—forms of political organization that can channel collective energies in ways that serve life rather than death, justice rather than oppression, love rather than hatred.

Fishbane's emphasis on the interpretive dimension of spiritual life suggests that the crisis of meaning in contemporary culture requires not just political solutions but hermeneutical renewal—learning to read the texts of individual and collective experience with greater wisdom and sophistication (Fishbane, 2008). The therapeutic encounter becomes a microcosm of this larger hermeneutical task, a place where human beings can practice the kinds of deep listening and careful interpretation that political healing requires.

Conclusion

The intersection of Jungian shadow work and Kabbalistic thought offers a profound framework for understanding the therapeutic encounter with suffering, evil, and the fundamental tensions of existence. Rather than seeking to eliminate darkness, this approach invites us to create sacred spaces capable of holding both light and dark, creation and destruction, presence and absence, in dynamic tension.

The eventual encounter with the shadow, as Jung recognized, plays a central part in the process of individuation—but this encounter cannot be accomplished through willpower or positive thinking alone (Jung, 1969). It requires the creation of therapeutic vessels strong enough to contain the divine light that seeks to be liberated from its imprisonment within our deepest sufferings. The heretical Kabbalists understood something that conventional religion often misses: that the very forces we seek to avoid or overcome often contain the keys to our liberation.

Similarly, Jungian psychology recognizes that our symptoms and pathologies often represent not mere dysfunction but misdirected life force seeking expression and integration. The therapeutic space, when properly conceived and held, becomes a microcosm of the cosmic process described in Kabbalah—a place where divine light can be poured into vessels, where those vessels can shatter when necessary, and where the sparks

of holiness hidden within apparent evil can be liberated and restored to their source.

This work requires tremendous courage from both healer and patient. As Jung knew from personal experience, "In this time of descent—one, three, seven years, more or less—genuine courage and strength are required," with no certainty of emergence (Jung, 1969). Yet the promise remains that, as Jung insisted, "no one should deny the danger of the descent... every descent is followed by an ascent " (Jung, 1969).

In our contemporary moment, when the shadows of human cruelty and systemic evil cast their darkness across individual and collective life, this integration of shadow and light becomes not just therapeutic luxury but existential necessity. The sacred vessels we create in therapeutic spaces become training grounds for the larger work of holding the tensions and contradictions of existence itself—learning to find divine presence not only in health and happiness but in the depths of suffering, confusion, and apparent meaninglessness.

Wiesel's testimony provides a crucial reminder that this work cannot be done from a position of naive optimism or spiritual bypassing. His willingness to remain angry at God while maintaining faith, to ask difficult questions without accepting easy answers, demonstrates the kind of spiritual maturity required for authentic shadow integration (Wiesel, 2006). The goal is not to resolve the problem of evil but to develop the capacity to live with ultimate questions in ways that serve life rather than death, love rather than indifference, justice rather than oppression.

The balance between light and dark, creation and destruction, good and evil is not a problem to be solved but a sacred tension to be held. In learning to hold this tension in therapeutic space, we participate in what the Kabbalah calls the work of tikkun olam—repairing the world. Every successful integration of shadow material, every authentic encounter with suffering that leads to wisdom rather than bitterness, every therapeutic relationship that models the possibility of holding paradox without premature resolution contributes to the larger work of cosmic healing.

The world's political landscape reflects the same shadow dynamics that operate in individual psychology, magnified to collective scale. The systematic demonization of political enemies, the projection of unwanted qualities onto other nations and peoples, the refusal to acknowledge collective responsibility for systemic injustice—all represent manifestations of unintegrated shadow material operating at societal levels. The therapeutic insights developed through individual shadow work become essential tools for understanding and addressing these collective phenomena.

Yet the scale of collective shadow material should not lead to despair. Both Jung's psychology and Kabbalistic mysticism suggest that consciousness can evolve, that human beings can learn to integrate previously rejected aspects of experience, and that what appears to be irredeemable evil may contain hidden sparks of divine light awaiting liberation. The slow, difficult, sacred work of shadow integration—whether individual or collective—represents humanity's best hope for creating a world that can hold both the reality of suffering and the possibility of healing.

In therapeutic spaces across the world, this work continues daily. Patients and therapists together engage in the ancient practice of liberating divine sparks from their imprisonment in the shells of apparent evil, allowing trapped life energy to find new forms of creative expression, learning to read the texts of human suffering with ever-greater sophistication and wisdom. This work serves not only individual healing but collective transformation, creating ripples of integration that extend far beyond the therapeutic relationship itself.

The sacred vessels we create in therapeutic space thus become training grounds for the kind of consciousness the world desperately needs—consciousness capable of holding paradox without splitting, of opposing evil without losing recognition of shared humanity, of working for justice without falling into righteous hatred. In learning to hold the tensions between light and dark in our own hearts and therapeutic relationships, we develop the skills necessary for holding these same tensions in the larger world.

This is the ultimate promise of integrating Jungian shadow work with Kabbalistic wisdom: not the elimination of evil and suffering, but the transformation of our relationship to them. Not the achievement of perfect light, but the capacity to find light hidden within darkness. Not the resolution of life's fundamental paradoxes, but the development of consciousness sophisticated enough to hold those paradoxes with wisdom, compassion, and hope.

The work continues, in consulting rooms and hospitals, in families and communities, in the careful attention we give to our own shadow material and the compassionate presence we offer to others in their struggles with theirs. Every act of authentic shadow integration becomes a small but significant contribution to the larger work of repairing a broken world, liberating the divine sparks trapped within collective suffering, and midwifing the emergence of forms of consciousness capable of holding both the reality of evil and the possibility of redemption.

Appendix: "Healing the Disembodied Sacred" Through the Lens of Sacred Paradox

Josie Gardner's "Healing the Disembodied Sacred"[1] offers a compelling parallel to our exploration of therapeutic shadow integration through Kabbalistic wisdom, though from the perspective of social activism rather than clinical practice. Reading Gardner's analysis alongside our framework reveals striking convergences and illuminating divergences that deepen our understanding of how ancient wisdom might inform contemporary healing—both individual and collective.

[1]https://arrow-journal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/HSER-8.1-J.Gardner-Healing-Disembodied-Sacred.pdf

Gardner's central insight about "disembodied responses to the world" resonates powerfully with our understanding of how therapeutic encounters must hold the tension between opposing forces without premature resolution. When she describes both activist and spiritual communities as reflecting disembodiment that "widens the rifts in our cracked, burned earth," she captures something essential about what happens when we fail to create containers capable of holding what Wolfson calls the "coincidentia oppositorum." Her bridge-walking between activist and spiritual worlds mirrors the therapeutic challenge of maintaining what we might call "orthodox heresy"—sufficient credibility to create safe containers while drawing upon insights that exceed conventional boundaries.

The parallels become particularly striking around the phenomenon of externalization. Gardner's analysis of "shadow activism" as the unconscious projection of "unprocessed inner pain, wounds, rage, and trauma" directly parallels our understanding of how collective shadow projection creates "political kelipot"—rigid categories that imprison divine sparks present in designated enemies. Her description of toxic call-out culture, where activists become "self-appointed guardians of political purity," exemplifies what happens when communities fail to distinguish between the shells of political projection and the divine light they have captured. This mirrors the therapeutic necessity of learning to extract holy sparks from psychological symptoms without being contaminated by their destructive potential.

Similarly, Gardner's critique of spiritual bypassing as using "spiritual ideas or practices to sidestep psycho-emotional healing" provides a social justice perspective on what we have described as the therapeutic failure to engage kelipot. Her observation that "love and light" spirituality ignores "depths of brutality, violence, and oppression" resonates with our argument that authentic healing requires confronting rather than avoiding the shells of apparent evil. The therapeutic space, like Gardner's vision of integrated activism, must be willing to descend into darkness to liberate trapped sparks of vitality.

Gardner's understanding of trauma provides crucial clinical context for how the cosmic catastrophe of Shevirat HaKelim manifests in lived experience. Her recognition that trauma causes "separation between self and body, self and other, self and earth" parallels the Kabbalistic understanding that divine light becomes trapped within kelipot through cosmic shattering. Particularly significant is her insight about intergenerational trauma transmission—that "we are all born with the trauma of our ancestors inside of our bodies." This provides empirical support for our understanding of how collective shadow material operates across generations, creating what we might call "ancestral kelipot" that require both individual and collective healing approaches.

Her analysis of how European colonizers carried forward their own ancestral trauma, transforming from victims into oppressors, reveals the mechanism by which unhealed shadow material perpetuates cycles of violence. This supports our argument that therapeutic work necessarily involves engagement with collective as well as personal dimensions, since individual symptoms often carry the weight of historical trauma that exceeds personal experience.

Where Gardner's framework diverges from ours is in its relative optimism about the possibility of resolving the problem of evil through proper healing and social transformation. While sophisticated in its analysis of psychological and political dynamics, her approach tends to locate evil primarily in unprocessed trauma and systemic oppression rather than grappling with what we have described as the fundamental presence of evil in the fabric of existence itself. Her framework suggests that with sufficient healing and social justice work, the tensions between light and dark might be resolved, whereas our Kabbalistic understanding suggests that these tensions are permanent features of creation requiring ongoing integration rather than final resolution.

This difference becomes particularly evident in her adoption of Resmaa Menakem's distinction between "clean pain" and "dirty pain."[2] While this distinction provides valuable practical guidance for therapeutic work, it doesn't fully engage with the theological paradox that even "clean" suffering participates in cosmic patterns of creation and destruction that exceed human moral categories. The Kabbalistic insight that kelipot are "vacuous apparitions sustained only by the divine light they have captured" suggests a more complex relationship between good and evil than Gardner's framework accommodates.

Nevertheless, Gardner's emphasis on "embodied sacred activism" provides crucial practical guidance for what we have described as therapeutic theosis—becoming more godlike in our capacity to hold paradox. Her insistence that authentic transformation requires "showing up in embodied wholeness" rather than "in pieces" directly supports our understanding that therapeutic encounters must integrate both universal and contextual identities. Her recognition that "the body performs the political on a micro level" confirms our argument that individual shadow integration necessarily serves collective healing.

Perhaps most importantly, Gardner's analysis demonstrates how the insights emerging from therapeutic shadow work have applications far beyond clinical settings. Her vision of "community spaces that host dialogue and deep-listening circles" provides concrete models for implementing what we have described as therapeutic spaces capable of holding sacred paradox. Her emphasis on creating "accessible, inviting spaces" addresses the practical challenge of making sophisticated healing work available beyond elite therapeutic contexts.

Gardner's work also contributes to our understanding of how therapeutic practice might be decolonized. Her critique of academic knowledge that fails to bring healing and her

[2]https://www.amazon.com/My-Grandmothers-Hands-Racialized-Pathway/dp/1942094477/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1

advocacy for "other ways of knowing" through body, dreams, and intuition supports our argument for integrating ancient wisdom with contemporary psychology. Her recognition that "knowledge that does not bring healing is not the knowledge we need now" challenges therapeutic approaches that prioritize theoretical sophistication over actual transformation.

The synthesis of Gardner's insights with our Kabbalistic framework suggests possibilities for what might be called "sacred psychopolitics"—approaches to both individual and collective healing that can hold tensions between inner and outer, spiritual and material, personal and political without premature resolution. Such approaches would recognize that authentic transformation requires engagement with shadow material at all levels while maintaining sufficient theological sophistication to distinguish between destructive shells and the divine sparks they have captured.

Gardner's concept of "provocative bridge-walkers between inner and outer, the political and the spiritual" captures something essential about the therapeutic stance required for shadow integration work. Like the controversial figure of Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz, who maintained orthodox authority while allegedly harboring heretical insights, both Gardner and effective therapists must operate as orthodox heretics—maintaining credibility in multiple realms while drawing wisdom that challenges conventional assumptions in all of them.

Reading Gardner's work alongside our therapeutic framework reveals that the integration of Jungian psychology with Kabbalistic wisdom offers hope for forms of consciousness capable of addressing the individual and collective wounds of our time. While Gardner's approach might benefit from deeper engagement with the cosmic dimensions of evil and suffering, her emphasis on embodied wholeness and accessible sacred spaces provides essential guidance for creating therapeutic containers capable of holding the fundamental tensions of existence.

Her work confirms that therapeutic insights emerging from shadow integration have relevance far beyond clinical settings, offering hope for collective healing approaches that can address the spiritual dimensions of social and political challenges while maintaining recognition of the sacred dimensions of both suffering and healing.

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