



EVERYTHING BELONGS

The Shadowlands
with Connie Zweig

Paul Swanson: The following poem, *The Holy Longing*, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is mentioned in the latter half of this episode. It goes like this, “Tell a wise person or else keep silent, because the mass man will mock it right away. I praise what is truly alive, what longs to be burned to death. In the calm water of the love-nights, where you were begotten, where you have begotten, a strange feeling comes over you, when you see the silent candle burning. Now you are no longer caught in the obsession with darkness, and a desire for higher lovemaking sweeps you upward. Distance does not make you falter. Now, arriving in magic, flying, and finally, insane for the light, you are the butterfly and you are gone. And so long as you haven’t experienced this, to die and so to grow, you are only a troubled guest on the dark earth.”

To be a troubled guest is to be stagnant. To fear the many deaths of the self that bring transformation, that bring life. So how does one break free and transform like a butterfly? By working with the materials shielded from the light, what Carl Jung aptly called the shadow. *The Holy Longing* is our innate desire for integration of our light and shadow. Not good, not bad, the shadow just is. Father Richard says, “Your shadow is what you refuse to see about yourself and what you do not want others to see.” That is the invitation of this chapter, to face your own contradictions and befriend your own repressions.

In today’s conversation, we find ourselves back in Richard’s Hermitage to talk about the themes of chapter 11, *The Shadowlands*. In our time together, we bounced around themes of persona and shadowboxing, how working with the shadow never ends, even if you’re an octogenarian.

Mike Petrow: From the Center for Action and Contemplation, I’m Mike Petrow.

Paul Swanson: I’m Paul Swanson.

Mike Petrow: And this is *Everything Belongs*. Richard, thank you again for inviting us back into your living room. Opie, thanks for letting us sit on your couch. We’re so excited to talk about chapter 11 of *Falling Upward*, *The Shadowlands*. And so, Richard, let’s start with the idea of the persona. As I understand it, Jung I think coined this term, but it comes from the Greek word for those giant masks ...

Richard Rohr: That’s right.

Mike Petrow: ... that the Greek actors used to wear, right?

Richard Rohr: Yes.

Mike Petrow: The big happy and sad face, so that no matter where you were sitting in a theater, an amphitheater, you could tell what their emotional state was. It’s funny, if we think about emojis, we realize we’ve come back to that. But this is the face that we show the world. It’s the mask and it, at times, can be a put-on or a fabricated face. And it’s interesting to note here that when Jesus used the word hypocrite, He was using another word ...

Richard Rohr: That’s right.

Mike Petrow: ... for an actor. So the persona is the person we think we have to be for the expectations and

approval of others, the role or performance we're expected to play, but here's ...

Richard Rohr: Well put. Go ahead.

Mike Petrow: ... where it gets tricky. Jung was clear that we do need a persona. The trouble we get into is when we confuse the persona we create or we need to become for who we really are in our core. So all this to get to our question, help us out here, it seems like we live in a moment in time where religion and society put such intense pressure on us to create such heavy, perfect personas. How do we not lose ourselves?

Richard Rohr: Well, you've answered so much of the question in the way you asked it. Thank you. Let's try this, it's just one approach, but what Thomas Merton and I try to say about the false self is almost exactly the same as persona. It's to know how to fit into any story, you have to give yourself a role, a title, a set of expectations of how you'll react, knowing those expectations creates the person that is able to interact in the play. Without it, when someone acts out of no previous structuring, you don't know whether you should laugh or cry. Seinfeld only became funny after about four shows. Do you understand?

Mike Petrow: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: At least for me. The first one, who are these crazy people? And then you see, "Oh, they're each holding a role, and now, they're living out of it and I expect him to say this and he does or he doesn't." There has to be an ego structure to operate effectively in community and in a story, in a circle of people. That's your persona, but the trouble is, and you said it already, after you've acted out of it for years ... I mean, that's why I just couldn't apply myself. For how many years, I wore my beautiful brown Franciscan robe, looked like Friar Tuck, I'm sure, for 15 years and I still ... It's lovely, but I just can't wear it all the time, because yes, it was an original way to situate myself in people's story that was safe and beloved, but now it's a prison. Now it's, "Okay. You're always supposed to be smiling, you're always supposed to be nice, you're always supposed to be forgiving," and now I know better. I'm not always.

And if I keep on the brown robe, I have to live up to people's expectations and my own expectations of perfection or happiness or enlightenment, whatever it might be. So persona, mask, false self is necessary to get you started. But when you take what is necessary as essential, am I using the right word there, I don't know, you're in trouble.

Mike Petrow: Wow.

Richard Rohr: It's just necessary to get the trajectory going.

Mike Petrow: Gosh, that's so helpful.

Richard Rohr: And then when you feel you got to live up to it, even in your own mind, I think that's what creates, forgive me, hypocrites. They don't know they're doing it., they really don't, but it's all they've ever allowed themselves to be. I'm just talking out loud, I don't know if it's making any sense.

Mike Petrow: No, that's really good.

Richard Rohr: Oh, I hope.

Mike Petrow: I'm curious, if I dress as Robin Hood, would you put your hobbit on and we could go trick treating together?

Richard Rohr: [laughs].

Paul Swanson: Oh, that's good, but I'd love to take this a step further and connect it to your book and you with this one layer deeper because you write in *Falling Upward*, you say, "Be especially careful therefore of any idealized role or self-image like that of a minister, mother, doctor, a nice person, professor, moral believer or president of this or that. They are huge personas to live up to and they trap many people in lifelong delusion." And so I think about the first time you were on Oprah, I remember seeing you at the office the next day. I said, "What do you do after being on Oprah?" He said, "Well, you go get the mail. You have a normal day."

Richard Rohr: Well, I'm glad I said that.

Paul Swanson: And I think about you in this because you're a priest, you're a Franciscan, you're an author, you're a beloved spiritual teacher. How do you stay grounded in this true self, this going to get the mail after being on Oprah without being-

Richard Rohr: Oh, I see where you're leading me and you're leading me well. You must confront your shadow self. You must. You must ... "I don't really always feel loving. I am not always forgiving and kind," you have to see that. That is an operative part of you and that there's a crack in everything. "That's how the light gets in," Leonard Cohen. Darn, that reminds me. I read a quote from Leonard Cohen yesterday and I said, "I need to put that on the front piece in the new book," and now I can't remember what it is, dang it. Lord, let me rediscover it if it's supposed to be.

So we call that shadow work because it is work. To integrate contrary evidence, to forgive contrary evidence. You see why it's so hard for people who've done something really deeply immoral or like murder or telling a blatant lie publicly? Well, they have to harden into their persona because it's just too humiliating. And you see what we put, for example, transgender people, gay people through, "Okay, your shadow self isn't even really shadow, but culture said it is and that's where we live our lives, dammit and everybody thinks it's shadow. So I'll just pretend I'm not gay. I'll pretend I'm not transgender, lesbian or whatever it might be."

God must have such sympathy for human beings, knowing how trapped we all feel. That isn't malice. It's fear of entrapment and we don't like to be hated by anybody.

Mike Petrow: Well, and I wonder, when I think about queer folks, if part of the reason there's such suppression and rage is because these are folks who are willing to suffer for their authentic identity and willing to suffer to love who they authentically love in the context of a culture where we're always lying to ourselves about who we are and always lying to ourselves about what we love.

Richard Rohr: Perfect.

Paul Swanson: Wow.

Richard Rohr: Well said.

Paul Swanson: Yeah, I don't know that it ever connected what you had just said, Richard, about ...

Richard Rohr: What?

Paul Swanson: ... the cultural scapegoating and the faux shadow that it puts on ...

Richard Rohr: Faux shadow.

Paul Swanson: ... as you said to those folks who are transgender or queer and that it's actually the cultural repression that's being placed on them as scapegoats so that the culture doesn't have to welcome the fullness of the spectrum of the beloved humanity. And that connection between scapegoating and shadow I think is rife with a lot of potential for any of us to look at, but especially those who maybe see themselves on a supposed moral high ground.

Richard Rohr: Yes. Maybe that's why so many people on TV, public forums now use the phrase, "Who I love," instead of using the word queer or homosexual or gay, "I don't think you should hate me for who I love." That so clarifies it. Why is that a problem for you? Because I'd rather take the authentic love of a gay person for another gay person than ... I'm going to say it, half the marriages that I know that are beautifully heterosexual, "Okay, you're doing it right. Male loves female, but you don't know how to love at all," in some cases. It's always being ready to be surprised, being ready to be undone, undone. Reality undoes you, undoes your certitudes, your absolutes.

Mike Petrow: So this is great and I love how you've just connected scapegoating to how we encounter and identify our shadow. And so to take a step back for our listeners, it seems like when the ego tries to create the perfect persona or identify itself as good or thinks it understands all there is to itself, then everything that gets overlooked, which is a lot or ignored or hidden or unwanted constitutes our shadow ...

Richard Rohr: That's right.

Mike Petrow: ... everything we're not seeing.

Richard Rohr: It's not your bad self, it's your rejected self.

Mike Petrow: Your rejected self.

Richard Rohr: That's a big difference. Yeah.

Mike Petrow: That's so helpful. And just because we reject it or even overlook it or are ignorant of it doesn't mean it's not there.

Richard Rohr: Inoperative.

Mike Petrow: Inoperative. And it seems like one of the ways that we recognize we've bumped

into shadow material is that we have these big reactions when we encounter others. Jung says, “Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourself.” Richard, you write, and I love this, “Invariably, when something upsets you and you have a strong emotional reaction out of proportion to the moment, your shadow self has just been exposed.” And I’m going to pause here and say it’s extraordinary the work that we do to justify our overreactions, but, Richard, you continue, “So watch out for any overreactions or overdenials. When you notice them, notice that the cock of St. Peter has just crowed.”

Richard Rohr: I always thought it was wise of the good Protestants. We had a cross. If you go all over Germany there, there’s always a cross at the top of a Catholic Church. Most Lutheran and many Protestant churches have a cock way up there at the top. I say, “Wasn’t that genius?” The crowing conk reveals, “It’s not what you think. It’s what you don’t want to think that is your best teacher. Darkness’s a better teacher than light.”

Mike Petrow: I love it.

Paul Swanson: I do like the idea of having something built into liturgy where you hear the rooster crow three times. What a great reminder that could be if there’s actually the audible ...

Richard Rohr: Wow, yes.

Paul Swanson: ... reminder as well, some sort of liturgical sound that would bring forth that sense of, “Look at your shadow. Look at the things that you’re repressing in the church, in our lives.” I think that that goldenness is forgotten so much.

Richard Rohr: There have been movies that have had the cock crow in the background and only probably scriptural people know the message. Yeah.

Mike Petrow: It’s so interesting. There’s a binary I want to point out and I want your help with this if you don’t mind, Richard.

Richard Rohr: I’ll try.

Mike Petrow: So on the one hand, we know that we are called to speak truth to power on behalf of a divine vision to criticize evil where we see it, to work against injustice. On the other hand, there’s shadow work and I’ve spent years in Jungian communities where everything is, “If something irritates you, take it back to yourself. If someone offends you, take it back to yourself. If your relative who supports the politician who you think is an abomination drives you crazy, take it back to yourself.” And in that work, the danger is that we then think that we still don’t work against injustice or speak truth to power. So my question is, how do we do both?

Richard Rohr: Good.

Mike Petrow: How do we let shadow work still put us in a place where from compassion we can speak truth to power and work for the healing of the world?

Richard Rohr: Just because it’s revealing something about yourself is not a liability, it’s an asset. Because now I know the lens through which I’m looking and I can’t use it to dismiss the issue or to

... Yeah. Yes, it is me and me is half good and half stupid. Does this give me an entrance way to the half good? I think it does. It can. It can. Instead of just, "Okay, this calls off the whole issue because it's just a projection." The projection says, "It's part of me, which means it's part of reality, which means it's part of goodness and not just badness."

Paul Swanson: And there's a power in not hiding from it. You don't have to be afraid of being exposed because you already are exposed. You already are owning that. And so that participation in the fullness of reality actually helps you step in and speak truth to reality.

Richard Rohr: You've got it. You're saying it better than I did. That's right.

Mike Petrow: That's so helpful. So shadow work educates our action in the world. That's really-

Richard Rohr: Educates our action.

Mike Petrow: That's-

Richard Rohr: "Why am I hating myself again?" you might well ask. Because any desire to hate, anything is, first of all, saying something about you, "Why am I hating that animal, that color, that emotion? Why? Where'd that come from?" It need not be hatred. It could be just the opposite, love. In fact, like Jesus, you tend to love the least of the brothers and sisters more because they open up the screen like a 3D screen used to do. Whatever you do to the little ones, to the shadow self is potentially an enlightened response. I know that's getting hard for people, but be careful what you hate, fear or avoid. That's all we're saying. It has a message for you. "Why are you so threatened by gay people?" to get back to that. "Why are you so threatened by black people?" And the connotation in most cultures, I'm sorry, but blackness with darkness, with evil, with sin, the poor Black race has to suffer that. It's our problem. That's not an inherent connection, but culture allows it to be.

Mike Petrow: I can't help think about the fact that, in a lot of this mythology of Christianity, there is the character of Satan who is the devil, but that name actually means the accuser.

Richard Rohr: The accuser, you got it. Watch when you accuse and watch what you accuse. That's right.

Mike Petrow: That's helpful.

Paul Swanson: That's great.

Mike Petrow: That's helpful for me to think about when the voice of the accuser is active in my own soul, whether against me or against you or in tandem.

Paul Swanson: I'm reminded of the movie 8 Mile, I don't know if you guys saw it, where it's about the hip-hop artist Eminem. At the end, there's this rap battle where they basically make fun of each other through their rhymes and Eminem owns his own shadow. He owns everything that could be used against him as a weapon, that could be accused against him and he just-

Richard Rohr: Wow. Real life.

Paul Swanson: It's based on his life, but this is like a fictional portrayal.

Richard Rohr: I see.

Paul Swanson: And it just leaves the accuser emptyhanded, or in this instance, the combatant in the rap battle. And as you're saying, it seemed like a brilliant connection ...

Richard Rohr: Brilliant.

Paul Swanson: ... point of how culture can maybe unintentionally even make that same point, "What happens when you are authentically real with your own reality and how you participate it? What can you be accused of that you don't already know?"

Mike Petrow: Yeah, I love that because he makes fun of himself in that and he diffuses that sort of ammunition in its ability to be used against him. Goodness gracious.

Paul Swanson: I never thought we'd be talking about Eminem.

Mike Petrow: I've been thinking about that scene this entire recording.

Paul Swanson: Oh, really? That's good.

Mike Petrow: I'm really glad you brought it up. Yeah. Richard, you talk about asking for one humiliation a day, and in this podcast, we've talked about, another way to think about that, for those of us who need the divine to be a little more gentle is one moment of humor a day, that ability to laugh at ourselves.

Richard Rohr: That's lovely. Lovely.

Mike Petrow: Do you think that's connected to the shadow work?

Richard Rohr: Yes, that is because humor is something that points out the inconsistency of reality at some level, how fooled we are and so I would totally follow. Authentic laughter is often a great freedom because you're laughing at the inconsistency of the tears of things again. Yeah.

Mike Petrow: And I love that you mentioned Seinfeld earlier because I feel like the genius of Seinfeld is how it mocks the expectations of society and points out the inconsistency. That's so helpful. Goodness gracious. Thank you for that, Richard.

Richard Rohr: Seinfeld humor is always making fun of the liberal, sophisticated New Yorker who we watch all day.

Paul Swanson: The supposed ideal, right?

Richard Rohr: Yeah. And they're constantly making fun of how selfish they really are. I love the Seinfeld characters, but they're all stupid and selfish, objectively speaking. Subjectively, we're secretly attracted to them because they're just like us. What a story.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. The foolishness of narcissism on display.

Mike Petrow: And the value of the trickster that lets us ...

Paul Swanson: Kramer.

Mike Petrow: ... even laugh at it. Yes. Gosh, this has been so rich.

Paul Swanson: Thank you, Richard.

Richard Rohr: Thank you.

Mike Petrow: Everything. Belongs will continue in a moment.

Paul Swanson: Today we're joined by Dr. Connie Zweig, a retired therapist, a writer, a climate reality leader and a Citizens' Climate lobbyist. Among her many notable books are *Meeting The Shadow on the Spiritual Path: The Dance of Darkness and Light in Search for Our Awakening* and *The Inner Work of Age: Shifting from Role to soul*.

Mike Petrow: Connie, it is so great to get to talk to you today at Everything Belongs Podcast. Thank you so much for being here with us.

Connie Zweig: Oh, back to you.

Mike Petrow: Oh, what a gift. Connie, we've talked about this before, I grew up as a PK. I was the son of a pastor of a evangelical prosperity gospel megachurch. And from the time I was very young, I was groomed to become a prosperity gospel megachurch pastor. And so what that meant was, from the time I was very young, I knew all the dirt about everyone in our entire congregation, so I knew all the shadow side of the community and I was expected to act a particular way. So I had to try to be this shining example of something. And that was a heavy toll throughout the course of my life to live that way. And it wasn't until studying at Pacifica that I encountered your book, which at that point was titled *The Holy Longing: Spiritual Yearning and its Shadow Side*.

And I have to tell you, I have a shelf of your books, but that book in particular set me free in the way that it helped me understand how the shadow works and shows up in spiritual community. And I'm so excited to have the new edition of it called *Meeting the Shadow on the Spiritual Path*. So can't wait to get into this with you. To start off, would you be willing to share a little bit of your own story of disillusionment with spiritual community and how that shaped you getting into this work?

Connie Zweig: Sure, I'd be happy to. I'm really touched by something you said, Mike, which is that in order for you to hold that spiritual persona, that was your parental and community expectation, you felt a lot of burden, you felt a lot of pressure, you felt ... I'm reading into it, but what I'm hearing is the expectation that was on you and that shaped you was difficult. And I want to circle back to that because I think that's what happens to a lot of clergy people. Right, okay, so let's circle back to that. So for me, it looks like a different story superficially, but it's not actually. Even though the content looks so different, the psychological dynamic is very similar.

So I grew up in a Jewish-agnostic household, secular humanism. My dad lost his father very young and declared that God was dead for him at that point. And he raised us really to be humanists. But when ... This was the late '60s. I went to college in Berkeley and I met a

guy I wanted to date and he wouldn't go out with me unless I was practicing transcendental meditation. So I, for no holy reason, went over to the TM Center and got initiated into this practice at age 19. And what I discovered was this ability to quiet my mind. And it was a revelation for me because I was very intellectual and academic, my mind was very noisy and reactive. And when I realized that I could sit there for 20 minutes with silence and feel rejuvenated, it became more and more appealing to me.

And so a few years later, I went off to training to be a teacher of TM and I spent the next few years, I don't know if it was eight or 10 years, in the TM movement, teaching people how to meditate and learning, studying myself, getting other techniques and intellectual stimulation because this was very because that particular movement had a lot of knowledge transmission. So I was pretty settled there for a while. My friendships were all inside the community. My intellectual references became more and more inside the group. My purpose became connected to spreading this technique to other people like missionaries.

And then I began to notice that a certain point, again, that, like you, there was a spiritual persona that was happening where certain things were permitted to be expressed and other traits and feelings were repressed into the unconscious shadow. So for example, you couldn't be angry, you couldn't be sexually assertive, you couldn't feel grief or other negative emotions because the teaching was, if you were meditating, everything was okay and you wanted to show that to other people, the truth, the light, and the way. So at a certain point, I noticed that. I noticed that I was sacrificing career ambition. I was sacrificing intimacy because I didn't have a relationship during those years and I wasn't building the skills needed to have a relationship because that's not what that period of time was about in that group.

And then there were rumors beginning that the teacher was having sexual affairs with students, even though he was telling other people to be celibate. And so there were secrets and there was increasing confusion about that. And some people believed it and some people didn't believe it. And then there was a series of practices given that also created confusion for people because some of the members started to lie that they were having certain state experiences when they weren't in order to get the next stage of practices. And I think that also happens in every denomination. You're privileged to get secrets or knowledge or practices if you obey, if you follow the rules and so on.

So there was a hierarchy developing. There was a feeling of hypocrisy. There were people who were accommodating all this. And I got to the point where I couldn't do that and so I left and I was really heartbroken and felt a lot of despair and disillusionment. I continued TM for a while and eventually dropped it and over the years have found other practices, but this was formative for me. Both the joining and the separation, both the practice and the letting go of the practice were all really formative experiences that I think are universal for seekers in every denomination.

So eventually after several careers, I decided to go back to graduate school and study psychology. And I realized that the longing that I felt, you referenced the book, *The Holy Longing*, that was from the titles from a poem by Goethe called *Holy Longing* and that poem really touched me and I began to contemplate it and realized that that yearning for what we now call transcendence or nonduality is the yearning for God. It's the longing for the union with the divine. It's the universal whisper of the soul by people in every

tradition. And because of the universality of that, I wanted to speak to or I wanted to try to understand the psychology of it and speak about that to people in the book. So I wrote my dissertation on that, how Freud viewed spiritual longing, how Jung viewed it, how Ken Wilber viewed it and somebody else, I don't remember the fourth.

And so I had this kind of framework that was helpful to me. I was motivated to understand myself and then I began to speak and teach about that. And later, I wrote other books about the shadow, but then this past year, we were Post Me Too movement and I had so much more life experience and insight into the psychology of religion and so I revised that book and it was released as *Meeting the Shadow on the Spiritual Path: The Dance of Darkness and Light in our Search for Awakening*.

Mike Petrow: It's such a good book. I can't say enough good things about it and I really think it lives up to its title of the *Dance of Dark and Light*. Because what I love about the book, Connie, is you hold the both end so well in so many different ways. You never counsel us to abandon the spiritual path, but you give us a really, really good guide for walking it and recognizing the perils of it. The other thing I really love is that you take such an ecumenical approach. When you talk about the shadow of spiritual communities and you even interview people about particular real-world instances of abuse and disillusionment, harm and hurt, you don't throw a spear at Christianity, you don't throw a spear at Buddhism, you don't throw a spear at Hindu or Vedantic schools, you cover all the bases and you really present this as a universal threshold that so many of us go through.

And I want to get into that, but before we get into that, you've answered this so many ways already, but let's start at the top. How would you define the shadow for folks who are listening to this podcast? They've heard Richard talk about it, but it might be a new concept for them. What's the easiest way to understand what is the shadow?

Connie Zweig: Okay, yes, I know Richard talks about it. So for me, I view it as a Jungian and a post-Jungian concept. So the shadow is the unconscious part of us that holds all the material that's forbidden or taboo or unacceptable to the ego. Does everybody have a shadow? Yes, and here's why. Because when we're little and we're surrounded by adults and we want their love and approval, we get messages from them, from parents and teachers and clergy and grandparents. We get messages that may be verbally overt and that maybe just glances where we know what's okay and what's not okay. We may be criticized, we may be shamed and punished and get messages very clearly or we may notice that we feel abandoned. We do something and we're emotionally abandoned. The person walks into the other room and doesn't talk to us for two days.

So as kids, we're getting these messages about, "Be polite. Be nice. Don't be angry. Don't push your brother. Don't touch yourself. Don't cry," and we learn then what's acceptable and that goes into our conscious ego, the personality that's being shaped or persona that's being shaped by these messages and what's not acceptable goes into the unconscious. We used to think this all happened in the mind, but now we know with the body-mind connection and all the research that's gone on, that the brain is in the body and the body is in the mind. And so the shadow material that gets repressed in this childhood process is everywhere. It's in our muscles. It's in our cells. It's not in some little closet inside our heads, right?

And so this shadow material is buried and sometimes it's buried so deeply that we have no idea it's there. And sometimes it's closer to the surface and it erupts. So maybe we've been told to be perfect and to be an example, and yet, we have some impulse that doesn't fit that and that impulse starts to erupt maybe in adolescence or maybe in later teens or young adulthood. That's the shadow showing, right? And so that material can be anything. It can be positive material as well as what we think about as negative. It's only negative in relation to the ego, right?

So let's think of an example of what might be some positive shadow content. My mother was an amazing artist, but she got the message through her childhood that that was not valuable. It wouldn't get her a husband and it wouldn't earn her a living. And so her talents and dreams of becoming an artist were buried for a long time. So that is not what we typically think about as the dark side, right? We think about anger, jealousy, envy, rage, the critic, addiction, but any material at all that isn't validated and supported when we're growing up can be repressed. So what isn't expressed gets repressed.

Mike Petrow: That's so helpful. I love that. I love thinking, foundationally recognizing the shadow's not bad. It's unknown, hidden and forgotten. And then because it's unknown, hidden and forgotten, it doesn't get to grow up. And I love thinking about the way that this splits us. So you mentioned clergy. What a great way to think about folks who have that heavy burden placed on them. I will say growing up, I had friends close to me when I was younger that used to say that I had two personalities. And they said, you are Minister Mike and you are Sinister Mike. And they would track which one was showing up in the room at a given time, but I also recognize in my own journey, because we believed that divine revelation should come right from the Holy Spirit and not from learning, there was an anti-education orientation how I grew up.

I was undiagnosed dyslexic, bad student and then I had this young adult realization that I love to learn and I rebelled by getting a bunch of degrees, which is not what you would typically think of as rebellion or shadow material, but it's helpful for me to hear you say that and I promised we'd pin it. So is there anything you want to say about clergy or people who are groomed or find their way into the leadership and spiritual communities and the heavy burden that lands on them?

Connie Zweig: So I think a lot of people can relate to your experience, who I've interviewed, who were told as kids, "All that matters is that you make a living, that you can take care of yourself. All that matters is having enough money. And so academic achievement didn't matter." It was for a different reason than in your case, but it's the same result. So these kinds of things are really universal. I just want to point that out. So if someone is in the position of a clergy person or a spiritual leader of any kind, they have the same situation. They have the minister part and the sinister part. They have the part that is the believer and the doubter or the puritan and the hedonist, right?

And those shadow parts, like you said, are young because they're undeveloped. They're not the parts that are cultivated and validated and lived out and so they remain undeveloped. So what happens in the situation where a religious leader gains power and authority and yet has these parts that are still lingering, and actually, in most cases, have valid needs. I would say that I talk about shadow characters. So there's this broad shadow content that we're

discussing, but in my work of shadow work, it's about forming a character so that you can actually identify when that particular little bit of shadow content or that aspect of the big amorphous shadow is emerging, right?

So if we look at that as, let's say you called it the minister and the sinister, so if we looked at it as the sinister part emerging, we would form that into a shadow character by recognizing, what are you saying to yourself when that comes up? What are you feeling and what are the sensations in the body? So as you begin to ... And one of the discoveries that blew my mind when I was developing shadow work is that it's always the same. So if you have a particular shadow character like say the believer-doubter, and let's say the doubter's in the shadow because living the believer, whenever the doubter is appearing, it's the same inner dialogue, same feelings and same sensations. And so you get to where you can recognize one of these cues that that unconscious material is coming forward and then you have a choice.

So rather than act it out in a hurtful way or a self-destructive way, you can say, "Oh, here's the doubter," or, "Here's Sinister Mike," "Here's the critic," "Here's the addict." And then you build a conscious relationship with it. And it doesn't possess you unconsciously. It doesn't carry as much charge as it does in the unconscious. But what we witness is that people are acting out these shadow characters because they're asleep, they're unconscious of them. So sexually, let's say, if people are really sexually controlled and their impulses are really repressed and they're not comfortable with that, and there are people who are comfortable with celibacy, but they're not comfortable with that and it's going to act out, it's going to erupt.

But what if they actually had the tools to recognize when that was going to happen and catch it in time before it hurts someone, before it hurts the community, right? So that is a part of it. Then there's another kind of response to your question, which is a little bit different, Mike, which is you were told who you were going to be and how you were going to be. And I think many people call to the clergy experience that. They have a call, but they're in some ways prepared for that call and they know what fits and what doesn't fit to live that life, right? And then they're in it. And what's happening, all the members or disciples or devotees, whatever we call people are projecting onto them, unconsciously attributing onto them their connection to God, their wisdom, their skills, their compassion.

And so they're carrying all this load of positive qualities, but they know secretly they're not all that, right? Even if it's a compassionate woman or man, even if it's a knowledgeable woman or man, they know they are not who people think they are because they have some connection to their flaws, to their limitations, even if it's just human limitations. And so the pressure builds inside of them. And I think part of what happens in these scandals in religious communities that lead to trauma and abuse, part of what's happening is in the followers and their denial. Part of what's happening is in the leaders and this burden they're carrying to be idealized, to be godlike, right? And part of it is everybody's lack of connection to their own shadow content.

Mike Petrow: That's really good. Paul, I know you have a question, but I'll add this. Richard often talks about he has a practice of praying for one humiliation a day. I really struggle with humiliation, so I'm going to say one humbling moment a day. And I think for a lot of us, that sounds terrifying, but I am thinking about Richard. He's Richard Rohr. How many

people are throwing projections at him and the wisdom to stay grounded, right? That's what the word humble really means, is grounded. Yeah, that's profound. Connie, that's brilliant. Thank you for all that.

Connie Zweig: So when we're aware, like Richard is, of the proper place of the ego, holding the space for the ego, so that it doesn't get inflated because that's the risk here. The risk is ego inflation, "I am better than everybody. I can do whatever. I'm immune from consequences. I got my connection to the divine," right? So I think what I'm hearing he's saying is, "Let's keep the ego in its place and remember who we really are. We're not that."

Paul Swanson: This has been so rich and thank you for starting us off with by thinking about our family as our first community. That helps ... I mean, we can't talk about, "This seems like shadow is good or bad," it just is, and then there's material for us to work with. And then as we've moved forward talking about spiritual leaders and that sense of calling, I would love to transition to thinking about spiritual communities and keep going with that direction. So thinking about your work, why do you think that spiritual communities are so susceptible to this type of toxicity that cast these long shadows and that some folks are even drawn to communities because of the shadow, whether it's consciously or unconsciously, but I'd love to hear your thoughts on that.

Connie Zweig: So I think the same dynamic happens around cultivating a spiritual persona in the collective that happens in the individual and groups have a life of their own. So when that starts to happen, people start to think alike and look alike, dress alike and eat alike and speak alike, right? Now, in some cases, they're imitating the leader. In some cases, they're imitating like the imitation of Christ. They're imitating a spiritual teacher who's not among us. In some cases, there's a psychological preparation for that by the way people were raised and taught to conform and taught to behave and taught to follow the father of the family. If the projection onto the religious leader is father projection, then that father-son, father-daughter dynamic that was in the family can begin to be repeated.

And sometimes this happens in intimate relationships too, the people we're drawn to, we can project a parent onto them, right? And sometimes we're projecting the ideal parent we didn't have and sometimes we're projecting the one we had that we don't want, the opposite of what we had. So the same thing can happen with a religious leader or spiritual teacher. We get set up by the unconscious for this dynamic, and then the group pressure begins to iron out the differences and people start losing their individuality, their voices, their differences, different opinions, different feelings and they begin to doubt themselves unless they're in the group, unless there are support from the group. "Oh, maybe I should get a job outside the community and develop my career. Well, what do you think about that?" And so they're returning to the group as if to the family to get approval and support for their individual lives.

So what happens in this dynamic? Some groups become cultlike and there's a continuum. There's interesting research about groups on a continuum where groups that support individual development and then begin to reduce it and reduce it until they become cults, right? So many groups are what I would call cultlike. They're not going to take the Kool-Aid and jump off the cliff, but there's a lot of group think. There's not a lot of room for doubt. There's not a lot of room for criticism or feedback. How many religious leaders ask for

feedback, right?

Paul Swanson: Yes.

Connie Zweig: So all of these dynamics are true in any denomination, as Mike said. They're really universal dynamics. And that's why the way that I wrote it, I felt that I wanted people to understand whatever their lineage. I wanted them to get the psychology of what's going on. So what's positive about this, Paul? I think for people who had very difficult family life, they can have a very positive experience in a religious community and it can be healing and it can mean that many of their needs that were unmet by parents or grandparents or siblings can be met now. The need to belong, feel safe and secure, feel seen, feel special, chosen. All those needs can begin to be met now, but what happens as people begin to develop out of that?

Carl Jung wrote about secret societies as groups that were transitions between families and what he called individuation, independent separateness, the hero's journey, right? And so these can serve as secret societies that are healing for people and transitional. For other people, it's not a transition. It's where they land, but they may get faced with shadow issues in the group, pressure, coercion even, "If you don't do this, you can't belong here. If you don't really totally believe Him with blind faith, you don't belong here. You'll be excommunicated." I think of Scientology and the terrible things they do to people who leave, right?

And so the groups have a rhythm and a dynamic of their own, I think, that is connected to the teacher-student relationship, but has its own life also.

Paul Swanson: This reminds me, I came to the CAC as an intern back in 2007, and one of the things that really helped me was you entered, at that time, this community, but with this acknowledgement of, "I came here to leave. I came here to be nourished, to serve, to support." And then after that nine months, my time was to leave. And that seems like a healthy sign of a community, is to be immersed in something with these porous boundaries, but also the encouragement for your own growth, that it's not forever. And I also-

Mike Petrow: I recognized the irony that I'm, "How long have you been here, Paul?"

Paul Swanson: But I did leave for a short minute after that, before I came back on staff.

Mike Petrow: Was that 15 years ago?

Paul Swanson: Yeah. I love that you pointed that out.

Connie Zweig: So what brought you back, Paul?

Paul Swanson: What brought me back was I saw how much power and potential this organization had to be of service in this contemplative way of being and teaching. And when I came back, my intention was only to be here for six more months and then I met my wife who's not a part of the CAC and then I stuck around and then got deeper and deeper into this work and continued to transform me in new ways. But I also say for myself in the stability of being a part of the CAC has been multiple belongings in other communities, that there's not this combative nature of thick walls while also recognizing that there's language that is easy to

pick up on in any community where you start to say, “Oh, I don’t actually know if what I know what I’m saying right now is just because it’s in the air.”

And I think, for me, that’s a telltale sign of going deeper into the work of, “Why am I saying this? What does it hold for me?” Because like you said, that can be a very supportive thing to have shared language where, “Oh, this person believes the same thing I do,” or, “Seeks out the divine in the same way,” but if there’s no, “They’re there,” and you’re using that same language, that’s when I can start to see oppressive walls caving in and holding you in a place that you no longer want to be. Does that resonate for either of you?

Connie Zweig: Well, part of what I hear is that you don’t feel controlled.

Paul Swanson: That’s it.

Connie Zweig: Yeah. So that’s really key. But many people in communities are not looking at how they’re controlled. They’re denying that. They’re denying the ways in which the teacher and the group are, you use the metaphor walls or walling them in. So that’s lovely what you said. I get it. And for other people, they really need to fully separate and find another path and explore something else. And that’s okay too.

Mike Petrow: I have to ask, Connie, you and I had a conversation earlier and I asked you ... This was such a great teacher moment, so I’m going to thank you for it. I asked you, why do you think it is that right now it seems like the light has been shining so bright on the shadow of spiritual leaders and spiritual communities? And I remember said, “Why do you think that is?” and you shook your head at me a little bit with my need to know why, but you really elucidated for me the light and the dark of the moment. So I’m going to give you that question again, what do you make of the moment that we’re in where it seems like every week there’s a new spiritual leader somewhere who is falling from grace or being exposed as being a part of some kind of scandal?

Connie Zweig: Yeah. I let go of why questions a long time ago. I don’t remember what I said last time, Mike, but I think I said it in a bigger context, that what’s happening on the planet generally is that all these very intense interconnected crises that we’re facing have come out of the collective shadow, so the climate crisis is no longer denied, right? The democracy crisis is no longer denied. These things, the social justice issues of racism and inequality are no longer denied. So they’ve come out of the collective and there are these layers of the shadow. We’re talking about the individual shadow, the family shadow group, community shadows and now we’re talking about the global shadow, the collective shadow, right?

So some of these things are much more in human awareness now than they’ve ever been. Even sexual abuse, that’s another one. And at the same moment that we’re facing all this, many people are spiritually waking up and having advanced states of consciousness, states of nonduality, experiences of the sixth and seventh chakras and wanting guidance for this. And that has brought many, many people into the church or into the synagogue or into the sangha or into the satsang or into the zendo, I always have to be inclusive, looking for guidance, right? And so some of these teachers and clergy people now have tens of thousands, or with Christianity, millions of followers, or in India, some of them have millions of followers.

So the pressure of the projection that we were talking about a moment ago is crashing some people. The pressure has become intolerable to be that ideal and so the shadow erupts and takes them down. And most of the spiritual teachers that we would recognize have not done shadow work, have not done what Ken Wilber would call the growing up cleaning up part. They've only focused on the waking up. And so they have missing steps in their development. They're not aware of their shadow material. They don't have the tools to work with it, the tools of shadow work and so we see more and more of these allegations, I see one every week now.

And what I tried to do in Meeting the Shadow on the Spiritual Path was tell a lot of those stories, but also set them in the context of recovery. How do we recover from this kind of trauma? People have PTSD from these experiences as well as loss of faith, which is so painful, loss of meaning, loss of purpose. So what do we know from psychology that can help us work with this experience, regardless again of the denomination? And so I don't really know the why, except that my hunch is that this is happening in the context of human evolution, in the context of a lot of shadow material coming out now about many, many issues and the pressure that people have if they're viewed as a savior, a rescuer, the archetypal projections here, the father, the know-it-all, the chosen one, right? There's a huge ... I mean, look at what happened to Jesus with that burden, right?

So I think that's part of what's happening, is that people are being asked to carry that for other people on a mass scale and we probably shouldn't talk about religion, but there's a lot of parallels going on with the Trump world, a lot of psychological parallels. So yeah, I don't know if that's a good response.

Mike Petrow: That's a really good response because I am exactly at this moment just letting everything you said fully hit me. And the notion that we are waking up to all these crises that have previously been tried to be pushed into the shadow and that to put that in context of also and people in record numbers are spiritually waking up. Jung says, "To increase the light, increases the shadow," right? There's no escape from it. I am reminded that, every time the shadow is exposed, that is an awakening. And I have not taken that into consideration, but also how hard that is and also recognizing how, when we wake up or when someone falls from grace and we immediately look for another savior, we set ourselves up to repeat the process.

So I'm so curious, Connie, you mentioned working with people who have survived this process. For our listeners, what's good work to do to heal and learn from going through experiences like this?

Connie Zweig: That's the second half of the book is how do we really begin this process, because for many people, they lose faith and they're done. That's what happened to my dad. Some crisis happens and you just conclude, "There's no God, there's no evolution of consciousness. This is all BS. There's no enlightenment, right? This is BS." So what I'm wanting to help people do is begin the process of self-reflection, and everyone will have their own pace and there's no right or wrong way to do this, but to begin to reflect on, how did you come to believe what you believe? Where do these beliefs come from? Is there something deeper in you than your beliefs?

Because from my point of view, beliefs are in the mind and that's not who I am. What about feelings? What are the feelings that you buried in your community? What are the feelings that were not permitted that you might take back out of the shadow now to experience a wider range of emotion? What have you projected onto the clergy person that you wanted so badly for him to carry for you or her to carry for you? The charisma, the compassion, the connection to God, the knowing something you don't know. And if it's more mystical, the higher level of consciousness. And to begin to reflect on, "What would happen if you reclaimed that from your clergy person and experienced it in yourself, if you began to cultivate those qualities in yourself?"

It doesn't mean you have to leave your guide if you choose not to, but it's about changing the dynamic, recognizing the projections and reclaiming them for yourself. And this is scary for people. It's scary to recognize a projection and let go of that ideal. It's scary to doubt your beliefs. It's scary to feel what you were taught not to feel. And so you can do this at your own pace and images of the divine that are buried in the shadow. What are the images from childhood? And there's a whole field called psychology of religion that traces childhood beliefs in God through adolescent and adulthood beliefs in God. What are the images that you've carried through your lifespan about the divine? And do they serve you now?

And if you are in late life, which is what my book, *The Inner Work of Age* is about, do they serve you as you face death? Do they create fear in you of death? Do they fit who you are now, these images, or do they somehow need to be reimagined, excavated out of the darkness and reimagined, "Who am I now and who is the divine now and what is my relationship to that and how can that be reconceived to really fit this new understanding or this experience of religious trauma?" So those are some parts of spiritual shadow work, and for some people, that will lead to leaving a community, and for some people, that won't. Some people will want to stay and maybe repair the hierarchy or reimagine the institution in a way. And some people will need to move on. And hopefully, they will have learned enough about the shadow not to recreate the same dynamic in the next relationship.

But the important thing that you're saying, I think, is this longing that we feel is it's gold. It's the whispers of our soul guiding us to the divine, whatever we conceive that to be. And if we can follow it and allow it to guide us, sometimes we're going to land in a difficult place, right? Sometimes we're going to land in a dark night of a soul like religious trauma. Sometimes we're going to land in a beautiful community that's ideal for 10 years and then it turns dark. We can't control this process, but we can attend to that whispering of our soul and allow it to lead us to the next experience of awakening and the next, so that it deepens and deepens.

So my message is not to give up. That's not what I'm saying here, "It's all bad and it's all BS." That's not what I'm saying. But there are moments that are difficult in the spiritual journey and they're difficult for the clergy people as well. Let's have compassion for everyone here who's a flawed human on this planet, but let's not tolerate the harm that's being done. And again, Mike, let's hold both. Let's have compassion and let's not tolerate it. Let's not allow that to happen to ourselves.

Mike Petrow: I so appreciate that. We talked a lot about how the prophetic voice is speaking truth to power on behalf of a divine vision and this vision of how things could be and could be

better. I'll let you have the last word and the last question, but I want to say this. Something that just lit up my heart when I read your book and I'm now rereading the new version of it, your original version was called *The Holy Longing* and what you just said there that it's the whisper of our heart and it's the desire for the divine and it's the desire for love and even our idealizations that we cast onto people, it's because we want to believe in the best of what we can be. And that longing and that desire is often what leaves us ... It sometimes leaves us susceptible to being taken advantage of, but what you have taught me is don't throw that away. Don't throw that longing away. Don't throw that desire away.

You said this in our conversation earlier, this idea that ... I always say love without wisdom gets murdered in the street, but wisdom without love dies old, cold and alone, and putting wisdom and love together, letting that ... This is my last question for the episode, how do we mature that longing so that we don't lose it, but it grows in wisdom and it can keep guiding our life? Does that question make sense?

Connie Zweig: For me, the answer is psychology, and in particular, depth psychology, the understanding of the unconscious. And if we were to add this understanding of the shadow to the spiritual search, then we have the opportunity to cultivate mature spirituality because we're not going to give away our power. We're not going to be a child in relation to a father, right? We're not going to become dependent. We're not going to give away our money or our body to someone else if we understand the shadow dynamics with the teacher and the community.

So for me, a mature spirituality arises from this insight and also the insight that we're accountable for ourselves. We are making choices that may lead to really painful experiences and we made that choice. And there's something in it that initiates us. There's something in that suffering that initiates us into the human shadow, so that we're no longer childlike. Because the child's position is that there's no darkness, but once we can recognize the shadows in me, the shadows in you, the shadows in the clergy person, then we can really have an opportunity for mature spirituality.

Paul Swanson: Well said. Well said. There's about 12 trailheads of conversation that I would want to explore from the last 20 minutes, but I like to end on a really practical question, not that this all has been practical, but to pinpoint it in a particular. You've shared so much regarding how the shadow was formed, how we can engage with it personally and in community and in relationship and your books offer tools for how to engage in that. And that really seems to be a way to deepen in spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence, psychological intelligence to be prepared for that. So when the next shadow eruption happens, we can have a resilient strength to be prepared for it and not accept the implications, like you had said, but to not be surprised by it as much because we all carry that.

So I'm a father of two. I have a five-year-old and an eight-year-old. And when I hear this, I'm empowered to keep doing my own work and for my wife to do her own work and how we support one another in that. And then as you've talked about just the state of our politics, the state of our planet, there's a lot that's swirling around. And part of my role and responsibility as a parent is how do I help prepare my youngsters for a very unpredictable world, which it always has been, and one, when we're not in control, which I think that illusion falls farther and farther away every day, wanting them to age appropriately be able to work with their shadow. How do you offer guidance to folks who are parents or

grandparents who have little people in their lives that they're trying to help support and tee up in working with their shadow for the long haul, so when these eruptions do happen, they're prepared at a way that they can be age appropriately?

Connie Zweig: That's such a great question. When I was writing *Romancing the Shadow*, I wanted a section on parenting your child's shadow and it didn't get in. So I haven't done any writing on that, but I have done a little thinking about it. I'm not a parent, but I'm a grandma. And so I've watched ages five and eight up close and what I notice is my two stepchildren are parenting totally different parenting styles. And the one that comes closest to parenting your child's shadow for me is about more listening than telling, more validating than criticizing. And it can be hard, Paul, because you can get triggered. To validate anger can be really tricky because it can trigger you, "Oh my God, my kid's going to become a rageaholic like my dad or something," right?

But staying so present that you're tracking their experience in the moment and their feelings and their little bodies and tuning in and teaching them how to tune into themselves, "What are you feeling right now? I'm so curious. Oh, isn't that interesting? What does that mean? Where does it come from? Why are you feeling that way? And what's going on in your tummy when you're feeling that way?" right? So you're teaching them without shadow language to self-reflect and that it's all okay, it's all acceptable. Now, they may do stuff that's not acceptable, obviously I'm not talking about that, acting outside the box in a way, but to help them to reflect on their inner life even at five, "What are you feeling? I'm so interested in hearing. What are you thinking? Let's look at this flower. What do you think about it? Where does it come from?"

And their inner world can lead to a teaching moment about where the flower comes from, but it joins their internal experience to what they're seeing. So knowing that what doesn't get expressed gets repressed as your parenting can give you a direction. And repression is going to happen. It's inevitable. They're going to form shadow content like everybody else, but they have an opportunity with you to have a deeper, wider experience than most humans will have. Does that make sense?

Paul Swanson: Perfect sense. That's beautiful. That's beautiful. That's really helpful. And I think too about, we'll often hear from, my wife's an educator and how in school, a lot of the kids who are perfect in the classroom will have their own outbursts at home and how healthy that is because that's the safety of the container where they can fully express themselves in the home, rather in the public square. And I just think that so much of what you just offered there resonates deeply for encouraging the increasing consciousness of children.

Connie Zweig: Thank you.

Mike Petrow: Goodness gracious. This has been an amazing conversation.

Paul Swanson: Yeah, so fun.

Mike Petrow: All right, Connie, thank you so much. I agree with Paul. I have about a dozen more questions for you, but this has been such a gift. Thank you for making time to hang out with us today.

Connie Zweig: Thank you both.

Mike Petrow: Oh, thank you for the many years, your books have been guiding my path and we'll definitely point our listeners to where they can find more information out about your work, but it's been awesome.

Paul Swanson: Yeah, incredible. Thank you so much, Connie.

Connie Zweig: Thank you for all that you're doing, both of you, with CAC.

Mike Petrow: Oh my gosh, what an amazing conversation with Connie Zweig, one of my favorite authors, one of my favorite conversation partners. I love the balanced approach that she takes to talking about shadow work in our own lives and in spiritual community. She's so good at laying out the value and the validity of our spiritual longings and our spiritual communities, but then also talking about how those same longings and idealizations in communities can expose us to potential harm.

Paul Swanson: I appreciate the way too that she spoke of the shadow, whether the communal level or the personal level, that it's a corrective. It's something that can be of service to all of us, to examine the shadow and not see it as something that is negative, but it's something that's hidden or repressed that has gifts within it that we can dig into and be in conversation with.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. And I appreciate her ecumenical approach too because it would so be so easy to just pick one religion or one spiritual community and shine a light on that shadow, but she shows it as something that's just a part of the universal human spiritual quest.

Paul Swanson: Yeah, it's something that you cannot participate in any community or any religion or any lineage and not expect to find some grand big old shadow lurking that is offering some gifts too, and also just some brutal honesty, to look at what's laying in wait there.

Mike Petrow: And that's the thing that I love about it is, when I read Connie and when we get the chance to talk to her, I don't hear her saying this as something that dissuades us from the spiritual quest. This is the invitation to the mature work, of really looking at those questions, "What am I being asked to see in my spiritual communities, in my spiritual aspirations or practice or even in myself that maybe I've been overlooking that needs a little bit of love and growth?"

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Corey Wayne: And me Corey Wayne. The music you hear is composed and provided by our friends Hammock. And we'd also like to thank Sound on Studios for all of their work in post-production. From the high desert of New Mexico, we wish you peace and every good.