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The Devil as Shadow: Satan, Iblis, and the Serpent in Eden

The Person and the Inner World

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Religions · An authorial series

Many religious traditions have an adversarial figure: Satan, Iblis, Ahriman, Māra, Loki. They are often pictured as enemies outside the human person. This essay proposes another reading: an adversary can also become a cosmic image of something a person possesses but does not acknowledge. The figures belong to different religions and are not doctrinally interchangeable; Buddhism and Norse religion, included in the archive's opening list, are not monotheistic traditions.

I. Where Religion Finds an Enemy

Satan in Jewish and Christian traditions. Iblis in Islam. Ahriman in Zoroastrian traditions. Māra in Buddhism. Loki in Norse myth, discussed earlier in the series' essay on Prometheus.

The familiar picture places such figures outside us: enemies of God, tempters of human beings, bearers of evil. There is you, your God, and an enemy between you.

Yet the authors suggest that reading texts rather than later images of horned devils reveals a more complicated picture. An adversary may appear within a divine court, perform a function within an order, or resemble something found in human life.

The essay therefore explores “the devil” as a possible name for disowned aspects of the self, in comparison with Jung's shadow. Its stronger claim that religions historically developed these figures for that psychological purpose is an interpretation, not an established account of their origins. Religious understandings of real spiritual beings remain distinct from the psychological reading offered here.

II. Śāṭān in the Hebrew Bible: An Adversary's Office

The source begins with the Hebrew word *śāṭān*. It gives twenty-seven noun occurrences and six verbal occurrences, citing Biblehub's Strong's 7854. Those counts and the noun/verb reference require separate lexical checking.

The meanings presented are ordinary ones: to oppose, accuse, or obstruct; an adversary or accuser. No horns or hooves are implied by the word alone.

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The archive gives several examples. Solomon speaks of having no adversary, understood as a political enemy. In Numbers, the angel of the Lord becomes an adversary to Balaam, standing in his way. Here an agent sent by God performs the opposing role. Psalms use related language for human adversaries.

Later texts introduce *ha-śāṭān*, "the accuser," with the definite article. The essay reads this as an office rather than an established proper name.

In Job, dated in the archive to roughly the sixth or fifth century BCE, the "sons of God" gather in a heavenly council and the accuser comes among them. God draws his attention to Job. The accuser questions whether Job's devotion is disinterested: does Job fear God for nothing, when God has protected him? He receives permission to test Job within stated limits. In the story, his action is subordinate rather than independent.

In Zechariah, dated here to the sixth century BCE, the accuser stands at the high priest Joshua's right and accuses him. The Lord rebukes him. Again the scene is judicial.

The archive then identifies 1 Chronicles 21:1, which it dates to around 300 BCE, as a use without the article, reading Satan there as a named figure inciting David to take a census (Bible Interp). Both the historical dating and the grammatical inference need textual care; the absence of an article alone is not a complete history of the concept.

The authors see a development over centuries: an ordinary adversary, a heavenly accuser, and a more individualized hostile figure. They conclude that the fully independent devil is a later development and that an earlier role operated within divine order. This is their broad historical interpretation, not a settled account of every relevant text.

III. The Serpent in Eden Is Not Named Satan

The essay takes a similar approach to Eden's serpent.

Genesis 3 has long been read as a scene of diabolical temptation. Reading its wording without importing all later interpretation reveals something simpler: the serpent is described as a creature of the field made by God and as more *ʿārūm*, shrewd or crafty, than the others (Christ Over All).

The article cites Bible Interp for the distinction between the serpent of the Genesis narrative and Satan in later traditions. It assigns the story to a tenth-century BCE "J" source and portrays its authors as telling a story involving a speaking animal. That dating and documentary reconstruction are disputed scholarly matters, not a universally fixed consensus.

The source emphasizes etiological features: why snakes crawl, why humans and snakes are enemies, and why childbirth involves pain. It reads the narrative as explaining the world's condition rather than expounding a complete doctrine of cosmic evil.

It then cites Wisdom of Solomon 2:24, “through the devil's envy death entered the world,” dated there to the first century BCE, and Revelation 12:9, the ancient serpent called Devil and Satan. The exact relationship of Wisdom's verse to the Eden serpent is an interpretive question; Revelation makes the later association explicit.

The authors conclude that serpent-as-Satan reflects a long history of interpretation rather than an explicit name in Genesis. Their psychological reading goes further: Adam and Eve already wanted to be like gods, knowing good and evil. The serpent voices a desire they can recognize as their own. This is one reading of the story, not the only legitimate religious meaning.

IV. Iblis in the Qur'an: Pride

Islam supplies another angle.

The Qur'anic scene describes God's command to prostrate before Adam and Iblis's refusal. Asked what prevented him, he answers that he is better: created from fire, while Adam is made from clay (Qur'an 7:12; the archive also cites DarulQuran).

The authors emphasize that the refusal concerns the human being before him. Iblis ranks his own origin above Adam's.

The essay identifies Iblis as a jinn, referring to the Islamic account of jinn created from smokeless fire. It also gives a narrative in which his piety had raised him into the company of angels before the test exposed his pride. The latter belongs to interpretive tradition and should not be silently equated with the wording of every Qur'anic passage or every theological school.

God casts Iblis down but does not destroy him. Iblis requests respite until judgment and receives it. The article then presents him in the role of tempter leading human beings astray.

The central fault is *kibr*, pride. The archive calls pride the greatest sin and the root of all others. That ranking is too broad to serve as a universal Islamic doctrinal statement; it remains the essay's emphasis. Its moral point is that Iblis's downfall is not simply a preference for evil, but the conviction that he is superior.

The authors then read his temptation of others through that same pattern: persuading people that they are better, exceptional, and need not bow. What overcame him becomes what he encourages in them.

The adversary, in this psychological interpretation, is not the opposite of humanity but a human failing enlarged to an extreme.

V. Ahriman and Angra Mainyu: Zoroastrian Dualism

Before moving to Christianity, the essay turns to Zoroastrianism.

The archive dates Zarathustra roughly to the seventh or sixth century BCE and presents Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, later Ahriman, as powers of good and evil engaged in cosmic conflict ending in the defeat of evil. It describes them as equal in power. Those dates and that simplified dualism do not represent the full range of Zoroastrian scholarship or tradition.

It argues that Iranian ideas influenced later Jewish, Christian, and Islamic pictures of Satan. The source calls 586–538 BCE a “Persian captivity”; that is an inherited historical error, since the period conventionally referred to by those dates concerns the Babylonian exile, followed by Persian rule. The broader question of Iranian influence requires more than correcting the label.

The authors' main contrast is between a dualistic cosmic opponent and the subordinate Satan of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic monotheisms. An adversary is not equal to God, even when resisting divine order.

For the essay, that makes the monotheistic problem more difficult. If darkness remains within a world created by one good God, its origin cannot simply be placed in a wholly independent realm. This is a theological question, not a settled answer to the problem of evil.

VI. Christianity's More Powerful Adversary

In the New Testament, the article finds a more prominent adversarial figure.

Jesus spends forty days in the wilderness and is tempted through concrete offers: bread from stones, rule over kingdoms, and a leap from the temple. He refuses. The story is told as dialogue.

The source gathers titles from John—father of lies and ruler of this world—alongside 2 Corinthians' “god of this age” and Revelation's dragon, ancient serpent, Devil, and Satan (John 8:44; 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9).

It then discusses fallen-angel traditions. The archive places Enochic material in the second century BCE, describes angels descending, relationships with women, and giants, and names Gadreel in connection with Eve. It associates Mastema with the *Book of Jubilees*. Textual strata, chronology, and the exact roles require careful checking. The statement that these

books simply “did not enter the canon” also requires qualification because canons differ among Christian traditions.

The archive attributes to fourth-century Augustine a developed Lucifer story: the greatest angel falls through pride with a third of the angels and becomes a roaming enemy. It then describes his Satan as almost equal to God. That latter characterization conflicts with the article's own acknowledgment of Christian insistence on divine sovereignty and should not be taken as an accurate summary of Augustine's theology.

The authors propose a historical hypothesis: as suffering, persecution, disease, and political upheaval became harder to explain, a powerful enemy offered a way to account for evil without abandoning belief in a good God. In their interpretation, the imagined adversary grew more powerful over time.

Yet Christianity rejected equal rival divine principles. The essay names Manichaeans in the third century and later Bogomils and Cathars, describing condemnation and violent persecution. Its compressed account does not capture their differing teachings or histories. The central distinction is between official subordination of Satan and popular images in which the enemy could seem almost overwhelming.

VII. The Shadow in the Shape of an Enemy

Here the essay arrives at its central interpretation.

Jung's shadow includes qualities, desires, and impulses a person does not acknowledge because they do not fit the desired self-image: greed in the generous, rage in the peaceful, desire in the devout, laziness in the industrious, envy in the successful.

In that framework, disowned qualities do not simply vanish. The article describes two possible expressions. One is projection: noticing in someone else a quality one cannot recognize in oneself. The other is an unexpected break in one's familiar conduct—“How could I have done that?” or “That wasn't me.” These are interpretive possibilities, not diagnoses that can be inferred from a single remark.

The authors read religious language as giving such experiences names and forms: “Satan tempted me,” “the devil put the thought in my head.” They propose that attributing an unwelcome desire to an external figure can be easier than acknowledging it as one's own. The person can preserve a good self-image while recognizing a powerful adversary. This does not establish that every believer is using religion in that psychological way.

Through this lens, the wilderness temptations become images of bodily security, political ambition, and a demonstration of special status. The source calls them Jesus's own thoughts

externalized into dialogue. That is its psychological interpretation, not a claim accepted by Christian theology or a historical fact about Jesus's mind.

The same reading treats Eden's serpent as the personification of a desire for godlike knowledge. The desire becomes a character with whom the protagonists can argue or agree. In psychological terms, the article calls this an intrapsychic object or projection.

Iblis supplies another example. Refusing to honor someone he considers inferior, he later tempts others through pride. The essay reads the figure as illuminating a possibility already within human conduct rather than implanting something wholly alien.

“The devil,” in this account, can be one ritual name for the human shadow. The phrase “can be” matters: psychological interpretation does not exhaust religious belief.

VIII. Repression and Integration

The article distinguishes two strategies.

The first divides the world into pure and impure, locating purity within oneself or one's community and impurity outside. When an unwelcome thought arises, it is rejected, prayed against, fasted against, or attacked as foreign.

The authors argue that this can briefly create a strong sense of righteousness and group unity against a common enemy. Yet denied qualities may reappear as hostility toward heretics, outsiders, or sinners, as inward cruelty, or as a scandalous break in conduct.

The source gives sweeping examples of inquisitors preoccupied with fantasies about witches and moral preachers caught in the conduct they condemn. These are broad historical claims, not a verified explanation of every persecutor or public scandal. The proposed mechanism is that forceful exclusion can fail to resolve an impulse.

The second strategy acknowledges what is unwelcome without identifying the whole self with it. A person notices vulnerabilities, takes responsibility, and works with them without pretending to be more virtuous than they are. The authors see greater freedom in that distinction.

They associate this with mystical strands: Kabbalistic *sitra aḥra*, the other side; Sufi *nafs*; Tibetan wrathful deities; and John of the Cross's dark night. The source treats them as converging on recognition rather than suppression. Their actual theological meanings differ, and none is simply a synonym for Jungian integration.

The essay's maxim is that what is denied may exert hidden influence, while what is encountered may become more workable. Its stronger promise that encounter necessarily liberates is not established here.

IX. Luther's Personal Adversary

Martin Luther supplies a Christian example.

Luther spoke of the devil as real in letters and sermons, describing nighttime disturbance and temptations toward despair. The famous story of his throwing an inkwell at the devil at Wartburg is explicitly introduced as a legend. The archive's claim that a stain is still shown is not freshly verified.

The authors juxtapose this belief with Luther's education and theological learning, adding a claim that he knew seven languages. That biographical count also remains inherited rather than checked.

They then read his descriptions through experiences now discussed as anxiety, despair, and intrusive self-accusation: a voice saying he is sinful, unworthy, and without hope. This is a comparison of language, not a retrospective clinical diagnosis. In the essay's rendering, Luther answers that he is indeed sinful but that Christ stands for him.

The authors find a distancing function in naming an accusing voice. Instead of treating “I am worthless” as the self's unquestionable verdict, the person can recognize an accusation and answer it. They compare this with contemporary therapeutic naming of an inner critic or inherited parental voice.

That resemblance does not establish that Luther practiced modern cognitive therapy. It shows how the essay interprets theological dialogue as a possible way of relating to distressing thoughts. Rather than denying their presence altogether, he engages them within the language of *Anfechtung*, spiritual struggle. The authors compare that with encountering the shadow.

X. When the Shadow Becomes Social

The essay turns to the danger of projecting disowned qualities onto an entire group.

It names false ritual-murder accusations against Jews in medieval Europe, witch persecutions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the “enemy of the people” during Soviet repression. These are examples of persecution and scapegoating. The article interprets them through projection, but that alone cannot explain their political, economic, institutional, and historical causes.

In its model, a group attributes impurity, sexual transgression, or conspiracy to a minority it casts as opposite to its ideals. Violence can then be presented as cleansing. Yet the underlying tensions have not thereby been resolved.

The archive invokes Jung's postwar reflections on collective shadow and Germany: education and cultural accomplishment did not prevent mass violence. Its warning is that disowned

qualities can be organized politically and attached to labels such as Jew, communist, liberal, or enemy. The labels are reported as instruments of demonization, not endorsed descriptions of the groups.

The ethical lesson is caution when calling another person evil incarnate. One may be confronting something of one's own, but that possibility must not be turned into a rule that every report of wrongdoing is projection. Real harm still requires recognition and accountability.

XI. Returning to Job

The essay returns to a feature of Job: the accuser appears in the opening council but disappears from the later dialogue. Job ultimately speaks with God, who answers from the whirlwind.

God does not answer every question in the expected form. The speech opens a panorama of creation: Behemoth, Leviathan, sea creatures, stars, rain, wild animals. The authors hear an insistence that what frightens Job also belongs within creation.

They interpret this as refusing to set everything troubling in a wholly foreign territory. Jung's *Answer to Job* (1952) becomes their reference for a difficult reading in which the divine image contains light and darkness. Following that interpretation, Satan could be understood as a shadow aspect rather than an equal rival outside God.

The source explicitly acknowledges disagreement. Orthodox theology may insist on divine goodness and understand evil through creaturely freedom. This essay does not settle that old dispute. It identifies a space for its psychological reading, while recognizing that many believers will reject the reading itself.

XII. The Thread Running Through the Series

The previous cycle concerned a center of consciousness: witness, *prohairesis*, fire, mandala, and meditation neuroscience. The authors connected these with a center not reducible to autobiographical narrative.

This cycle turns toward the periphery: what the center fails to include, the shadow.

The essay argues that an unexamined center can remain fragile. Breathing meditation does not automatically address denied rage. Repeating “I am That” does not by itself undo envy. Stoic deliberation can become a rationalization if it merely gives an acceptable story to fear. These are cautions about possible avoidance, not claims that such practices inevitably conceal pathology.

The authors interpret religious adversary figures as opportunities to recognize something within rather than merely fear something outside. They read “deliver us from evil” and *Aʿūdhu billāhi min al-shayṭān*, seeking refuge in God from Satan, through pride, envy, and anger arising in human life. This psychological reading does not replace the prayers' meanings within their religious communities.

In the essay's terms, the devil is one old and forceful name for the shadow, and an encounter with that image can become an encounter with oneself.

XIII. What Remains

The archive closes by claiming that modern people rarely believe literally in Satan and judging disbelief preferable. Those are the authors' cultural and evaluative assertions, not a description of all contemporary people or a dismissal of believers adopted by this translation.

Their more specific concern is that abandoning a religious image can also remove a vocabulary for discussing an unwelcome part of oneself. A person who once could name an inner conflict may now describe only an unexplained outburst, aggression, a strange impulse, or a bad day.

The authors gather Satan, Iblis, Māra, Loki, and Ahriman as different figures through which they wish to discuss the unacknowledged. Their differences remain real; none can be reduced without remainder to a single psychological structure.

The practical question at the end is not “Who is to blame inside me?” but “What in my own experience am I unwilling to notice?” It invites reflection, not an assumption that every difficulty comes from a hidden fault or that a harmed person caused another's conduct.

That question leads to the next essay, about looking into the abyss without immediately turning away.

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Archival editorial note. This is an authorial psychological reading of religious figures, not a theological consensus or a verified genealogy of religion. The archive mislabels the Babylonian exile as Persian captivity, groups nonmonotheistic traditions into a monotheistic opening, and overstates several claims about Augustine, Zoroastrian dualism, biblical dating, canon, and pride in Islam. Those problems are explicitly identified rather than silently validated. Projection is one interpretive possibility, not a universal cause of persecution or a way to dismiss reports of harm. No retrospective diagnosis of Luther or diagnosis of the reader is made. Source links and quotation wording are inherited and not newly verified.

References Inherited from the Archive

These links preserve the archive’s reference record; their contents were not newly checked for this translation.

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