

The Shadow: Our Darker Side

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**The
Shadow is
our unlived
life.**

The Jungian shadow is composed of the dark and unknown aspects of personality. The shadow is created by the oppositeness of life and the need for choice.

To choose to be one way is to choose not to be another. The shadow is made up of the "unchosen" choices. If, as a child you choose to be tough, then you are not tender and vice versa. In a choice to be an athlete you may give up the options to be a musician or an artist. You learn to either keep your feelings in or to let them out.

Choices are made and direction is given to personality development. The shadow can be viewed as the unlived life resulting from a certain pattern of life choices. Thomas Moore in *The Care of the Soul* states that, "The person we choose to be, ... automatically creates a dark double -- the person we choose not to be."

Robert Louis Stevenson's story of Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde is the symbolic story of a man and his shadow. The shadow refers to everything that has been repressed and embodies all of life that has not been allowed expression. Robert Johnson calls the shadow, "...our psychic twin that follows us like a mirror image."

Sometimes life choices are not freely made. We are taught as children to be one way and not another and have little choice. Boys may be taught not to cry and girls not to be assertive. Some elements of the shadow can indeed be potentially harmful and do not need to be acted out. Uncontrolled anger, impulsive sexuality, lying, and stealing are shadow potentials that are best kept in the shadow and the socialization process sees that they are. The shadow contains not only the positive of potential life choices "not made" but the negative potential of unbridled acting out.

Most often the shadow comes to be seen as entirely negative and its recognition is resisted. If a person strongly denies the shadow then he may be overly focused on the persona. He may only know himself as persona and this is all that is shown to society.

The "Golden Shadow"

The shadow, however, does hold significant positive features for the personality. Eventually these positive features need integration if the individuation process is to proceed. Robert Johnson says that there is "gold" in the shadow. This gold needs to be mined and brought to the surface.

Murray Stein observes that the shadow represents the repressed in our life. At midlife, he says the shadow or repressed, "...returns and needs to be dealt with in a new way, because the seeds of psychological renewal and of possible future directions for life lie hidden within it." Regarding the return of the repressed Stein writes, "When the unconscious erupts at midlife, what first comes most strongly to the fore are rejected pieces of personality that were left undeveloped and cast aside sometime in the past, for one reason or another, in the rapid movement forward of personal history. Life still clings strongly to them. And actually the seeds of the future lie in these neglected figures, which now return and call for restoration and attention." There is much positive that can be gained from the shadow, but there is much resistance.

Robert Johnson observes that people resist the more noble aspects of their shadow more strenuously than the dark sides. He says that, "The gold is related to our higher calling and this can be hard to accept at certain stages of life." While still concerned with ego differentiation and type development we may not want to hear of the challenge of a higher calling.

Johnson reminds us that "to own one's shadow is whole making." He also tells us, "No one can be anything but a partial being, ravaged by doubt and loneliness, unless he has close contact with his shadow. The shadow consists of those aspects of your character that belong to you but that have not been given any conscious place in your life. ... Assimilating one's shadow is the art of catching up on those facets of life that have not been lived out adequately."

[The Inner Feminine and the Inner Masculine](#)

**The
Shadow is
both
negative
and
positive.**

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