

# Shadow: The Darkness within Human Psyche

## Editorial Team

**“No tree, it is said, can grow to heaven unless its roots grow down to hell.” - Carl Jung**

There is so much truth in this quote by Carl Jung. We don't evolve spiritually simply by being good people, doing the right things, and spreading light. This should not be taken as wrong, since being a good person definitely helps bring love and light into a world that is pretty dark most of the time, so you definitely should aim to be as kind and compassionate as you can be. But goodness is not unparalleled within you and in order to transform your soul and evolve both emotionally and spiritually, you'll need to dig down deep into your unconscious to explore what waits for you there. Just like a lotus that springs forth pristine and beautiful out of the muck, our souls are alchemized when we descend into the muck and the mire of the shadow self.

Goodness can only come from a true understanding of the opposite, and the choice to act in the good in the face of the suffering of life. This truth is written in our genetic code, and it's a choice we must all make. Carl Jung explains:

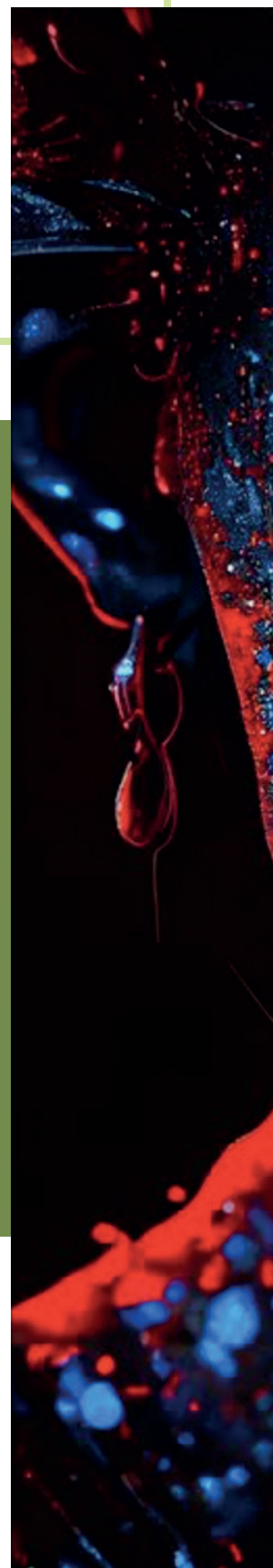
In the journey to become enlightened – the path to become the greatest version of human possible – you must see the depths of sorrow to be able to fully appreciate the peaks of happiness within yourself. It is not enough to merely acknowledge the potential – you must truly understand/comprehend and in many cases experience the capacity for loss.

One of the great dangers on the spiritual path is that the ego becomes spiritualized. The ego loves to think of itself as spiritually evolved. It is just another way that it manages to feel important and in control. It is very difficult to free yourself from an enlightened ego.

We often feel so helpless when confronted by our deep psyche. This is because of the Shadow which is the dark and emotional aspect of our psyche. Our inner shadow is composed of parts of us that we subconsciously reject. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance. The analogy of shadow itself indicates that the solution to confront your shadow lies in bringing it in the light.

**“If I accept the lowest in me, I lower a seed into the ground of Hell.  
The seed is invisibly small, but the tree of life grows from it and conjoins  
the Below with the Above. At both ends there is fire and blazing embers.  
The Above is fiery and the Below is fiery. Between the unbearable fires grow your life.**

**You hang between these two poles. In an immeasurably frightening movement  
the stretched hanging welters up and down. We thus fear our lowest, since that  
which one does not possess is forever united with the chaos and takes part in its  
mysterious ebb and flow. Insofar as I accept the lowest in me – precisely that red  
glowing sun of the depths, the upper shining sun also rises. Therefore he who  
strives for the highest finds the deepest.”**







There are certain features which offer the most obstinate resistance to moral control and prove almost impossible to influence. These resistances are usually bound up with Projections which are not recognized as such, and their recognition is a moral achievement beyond the ordinary. Now everyone have shadow personality traits i.e elements of our personality that we dislike or of which we are ashamed and that rather than acknowledge their presence, we project them - onto other people.

Despite the pervasiveness of darkness, we have a deep-rooted conviction that 'Ease' is our entitlement and darkness is a failure. Driven by this belief system, we do everything possible to remove the pain.

Therefore, it's not an easy journey to face the pieces of yourself you don't want to acknowledge, but when you can do this, you become aware of the unconscious processes and complexes that motivate your actions, reactions, thoughts, and feelings. It probably doesn't mean that nothing will ever bother you, but you become more and more empowered with every fragment of your shadow self you face, acknowledge, and integrate. Once you understand how the fragments of your shadow self influence and trigger you, you then have the choice as to whether or not you'll let them affect you. Your freedom is found once you realize you have a choice.

A common misconception in our society today is notion that harmlessness is synonymous with virtue. "And if you think tough men are dangerous, wait until you see what weak men are capable of", as renowned book author Jordan Peterson People assume because someone is incapable of cruelty, he is more virtuous than someone who is. But, in fact, Morality is the constrained capability for mayhem and malevolence. "But If you're a monster and you show restraint and not act monstrosly, then you're virtuous.", as Canadian psychologist and book author Jordan Peterson says, "It is not good to be moral if the reason your moral is that you cannot be otherwise.". The great philosopher Nietzsche had the view that most of morality is cowardice. The modern cinematic reference in the movie Joker goes, "All it takes is one bad day to reduce the sanest man alive to lunacy...".

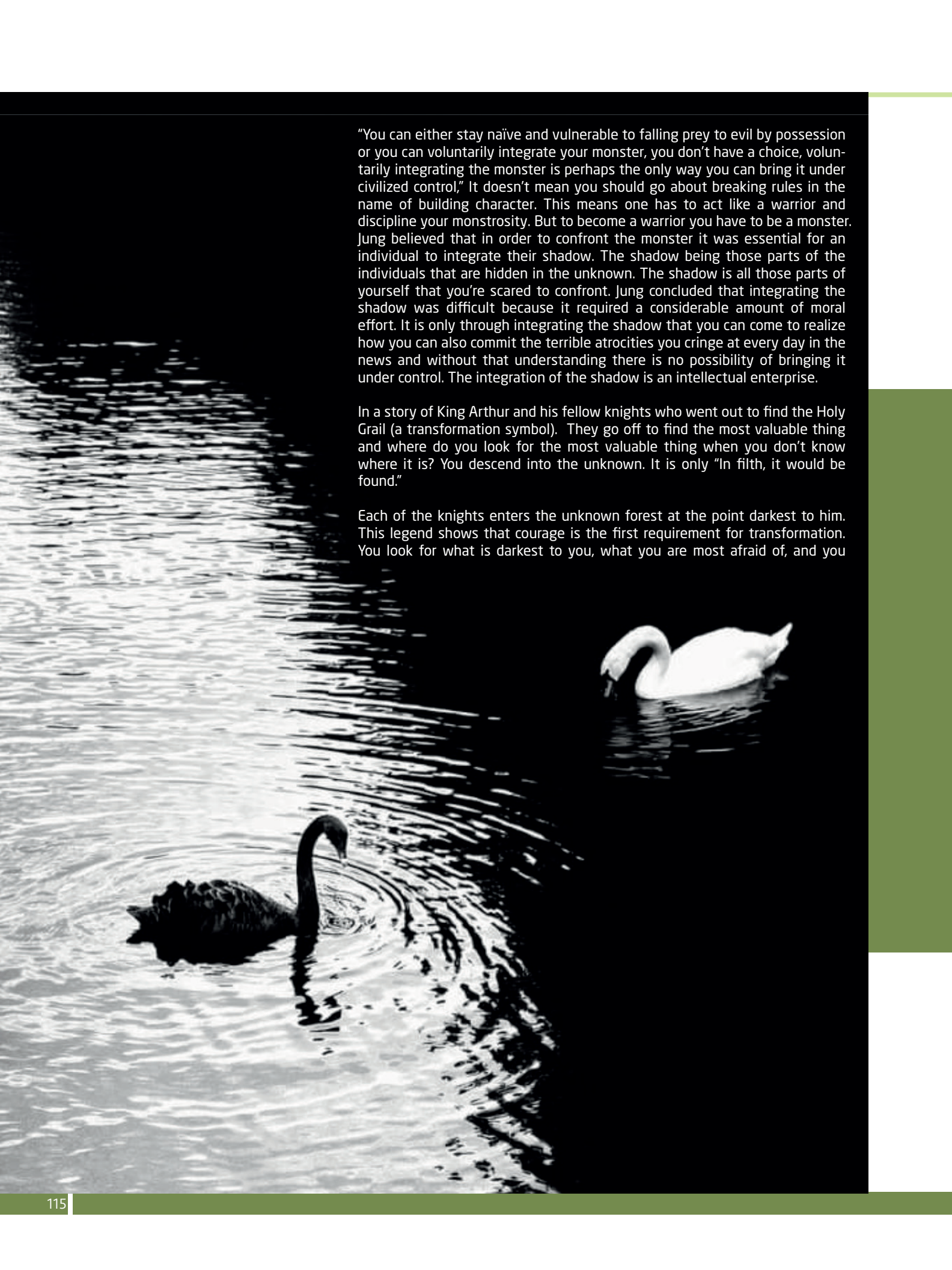
The prevalence of the antihero myth in movies can be attributed to its popularity among audiences, as evidenced by the massive success of Hollywood films featuring characters like James Bond, Wolverine, and Deadpool who often engage in morally questionable actions such as killing. According to Jordan Peterson, this attraction to antiheroes stems from a desire to embody their strength and resilience, which is often fueled by an inner "mon-



ster." Peterson's concept of the hero myth is illustrated by J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, in which the flawed protagonist had some parts of Voldemort within him and penchant for rule-breaking make him a relatable and compelling character. Throughout the book, we witness the protagonist's ongoing battle against his inner darkness and ultimately developing a strong moral character in spite of it.

The philosophy of martial arts revolves around the concept of mastering one's inner "monster" and attaining self-control and respect for others. Practicing martial arts trains individuals to harness their strength while maintaining peacefulness and avoiding conflict. Being a skilled fighter also deters potential attackers, as exemplified by figures like Dwayne Johnson who rarely find themselves in physical altercations. Jordan Peterson asserts that the ultimate goal for any rational person should be peace, and understanding each other's capabilities can prevent violent confrontations.

"You should be a monster. An absolute monster. And then you should learn how to control it." — Jordan B. Peterson. Becoming a controlled monster is the main ethos in the philosophy of martial arts. Martial arts philosophy emphasizes on the importance of self-control and respect for others. Martial arts trains you to be a monster, and also to be peaceful and to avoid fights.



"You can either stay naïve and vulnerable to falling prey to evil by possession or you can voluntarily integrate your monster, you don't have a choice, voluntarily integrating the monster is perhaps the only way you can bring it under civilized control." It doesn't mean you should go about breaking rules in the name of building character. This means one has to act like a warrior and discipline your monstrosity. But to become a warrior you have to be a monster. Jung believed that in order to confront the monster it was essential for an individual to integrate their shadow. The shadow being those parts of the individuals that are hidden in the unknown. The shadow is all those parts of yourself that you're scared to confront. Jung concluded that integrating the shadow was difficult because it required a considerable amount of moral effort. It is only through integrating the shadow that you can come to realize how you can also commit the terrible atrocities you cringe at every day in the news and without that understanding there is no possibility of bringing it under control. The integration of the shadow is an intellectual enterprise.

In a story of King Arthur and his fellow knights who went out to find the Holy Grail (a transformation symbol). They go off to find the most valuable thing and where do you look for the most valuable thing when you don't know where it is? You descend into the unknown. It is only "In filth, it would be found."

Each of the knights enters the unknown forest at the point darkest to him. This legend shows that courage is the first requirement for transformation. You look for what is darkest to you, what you are most afraid of, and you



confront it. "You probably don't have any insight whatsoever into your capacity for good until you have some well-developed insight into your capacity for evil." And the gateway to wisdom or the gateway to developing your personality and realizing your full potential is precisely through the portal which you do not want to pass through. "That which you most need is to be found, where you least want to look." The unconscious always tries to produce an impossible situation in order to force the individual to bring out his very best. Otherwise one stops short of one's best, one is not complete, one does not realize oneself. What is needed is an impossible situation where one has to renounce one's own will and one's own wit and do nothing but wait and trust to the impersonal power of growth & development. When you are up against a wall, be still and put down roots like a tree, until clarity comes from deeper sources to see over that wall.

The psychoanalyst Gustav Jung has said that to be in a situation where there is no way out, or to be in a conflict where there is no solution, is the classical beginning of the process of individuation. It is meant to be a situation without solution: the unconscious wants the hopeless conflict in order to put ego-consciousness up against the wall, so that the man has to realise that whatever he does is wrong, whichever way he decides will be wrong. This is meant to knock out the superiority of the ego, which always acts from the illusion that it has the responsibility of decision. Naturally, if a man says, "Oh well, then I shall just let everything go and make no decision, but just protract and wriggle out of [it]," the whole thing is equally wrong, for then naturally nothing happens. But if he is ethical enough to suffer to the core of his personality, then generally because of the insolubility of the conscious situation, the Self manifests.

In religious language you could say that the situation without issue is meant to force the man to rely on an act of God. In psychological language the situation without issue, which the anima arranges with great skill in a man's life, is meant to drive him into a condition in which he is capable of experiencing the Self. When thinking of the anima as the soul guide, we are apt to think of Beatrice leading Dante up to Paradise, but we should not forget that he experienced that only after he had gone through Hell. Normally, the anima does not take a man by the hand and lead him right up to Paradise; she puts him first into a hot cauldron where he is nicely roasted for a while - (Marie-Louise von Franz). Unfortunately there can be no doubt that man is, on the whole, less good than he imagines himself or wants to be. As Jung quotes, "Every real solution is only reached by intense suffering." The Nobel Laureate and Russian historian Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, beautifully summarizes this in his collection *Gulag Archipelago*, "If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

#### Reading Sources:

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