

I AM DYING. Ghostly ethereal shapes float around me. Before me, a tunnel like an artist's sketch appears. I can see into it and also around it. My soul is slowly detaching itself from my body and as I float away, it's as if I am looking at my life through a telescope. "Nothing really matters", I think. "I can work myself to death to accumulate wealth and possessions, but at the end of the day, does it really matter? When I leave this world, I will simply leave everything behind". Even major problems seem small and insignificant against the backdrop of the vastness of time.

I am acutely aware of my state of mind. My thoughts at this moment of death, will determine whether I enter the darkness or not. If I do that darkness will be of my own making, because the states of heaven and hell exist within us. Only our thoughts determine the outcome and the final destination.

My brother, Brian, has just died. The shock ripped my soul from my body. As I float away, I am aware of my body, but not in it. For as far back as I could remember I had never experienced being loved. I could love, but to believe that I was lovable was another issue.

The tunnel looks inviting. I hear heavenly voices calling my name. In this world between worlds, I hear the words, "If you want to leave your body permanently tonight, we will assist you. If you feel you cannot go on, like a midwife delivering a baby, we will cut the cord that binds you to your body and take you home".

more good deeds one does in life, the more one shares with humanity the greater one's seriti grows.

All the time our seriti (aura) grows, however, so does the inner shadow (shade). This inner shadow is the sum total of all that is good and bad in us. It is this inner shadow that we take with us into the world hereafter and which lies sleeping in the subconscious.

My near death experience was the accumulation of years of trauma and when I left my body, the "inner shadow" had taken over. All the suppressed emotion, fear, depression and emotional trauma had accumulated over a lifetime, until I literally passed through "the valley of shadow of death".

2References to this shadow are found in literature, myth, The Bible and common English expressions, "a shadowy figure", "the valley of shadow and death", "a shadow of your former self", and so on. All these phrases carry a hint of something mysterious, fearful, misunderstood, incomplete, or possibly even dysfunctional.

We are both fascinated and appalled by the shadow in literature. Dr Jekyll's alter ego, Mr. Hyde is a menace. Werewolves are good men by day, but turn into brutal beasts at the full moon. Peter Pan lost his Shadow and Wendy had to sew it back on again, because Peter could not exist without it. When we are separated from our Shadow, we become Peter Pan, emotionally immature, unable to face reality and trapped in wishful thinking, unwilling to grow. We can avoid the Peter Pan Syndrome by embracing our shadow and

then speak to us

I feel sorely tempted to co-operate, to let go and to move through the tunnel. Brian's death was the fourth violent death in the family; my mother had recently died a terrible death from cancer while my son, Gareth, had been seriously injured in an appalling car accident. The emotional pain I feel is unbearable. Then, suddenly, two lines of light probe the darkness looking for me. It is the love of my dear friends, Peter and Gill, keeping vigil at my bedside. They really care about me! They don't want me to die! For the first time in my life, I could actually "feel" love. I thought about my children and what my death would mean to them. I thought about all the things I still wanted to do, about the people who loved me. "If that is what love is", I thought, "then I want to go back to experience it". I follow the beams of light that gently guide me back into my body. Back to Wynberg, Cape Town, where Gill and Peter are waiting for me. Until then my body had been ice cold. Gill told me later, that the moment I made a conscious decision to return, my body began to warm up again.

1In the African Tradition, the word "seriti", means the "aura" around a person. It is what identifies us to be good or bad or, indeed what will identify us as being depleted of goodness. The

the opportunities it offers.

Jung divided the darker aspects of our personality into two types, the collective shadow and the personal shadow.

3The collective shadow, however, is made of negative traits held by races of people and countries as a whole, projected onto a minority group or nation. Hitler's soldiers exterminating millions of Jews during World War II, and the Genocide in Rwanda. It is also the "Collective Unconscious" that aspect of the unconscious shared by all human beings. To quote Haleakala Hew Len, Ph.D., "Being residents of the Cosmos, we all share a common pool of old negative memories. You are in me and I am within you. You and I share all the common memories since the beginning of creation. Why is that so? Because we are like everything in a pot of stew. We can't escape each other.

Our Personal Shadow is that part of ourselves that we keep hidden and it expresses itself through impulsiveness, symbols, dreams, fantasies, art, visions and imagination. It is that impulsive part of our nature that reacts without thinking. For example: Mary, recently purchased a brand new car that she parked outside her townhouse. Some time later, she discovered that someone had

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taken a nail and scratched it all along the left hand side. Infuriated, she assumed it was her neighbour, John, who was an avid gardener who had prize Rose bushes in his garden. Taking a pair of scissors, Mary, infuriated, attacked his garden, slashing off every rose bud in sight. Imagine her horror, when she discovered later, that the neighbour was not the culprit! This is how the shadow comes out to play. It makes us say and do things without thinking, often to our detriment and this causes great embarrassment, shame and guilt that then becomes part of the inner shadow.

The shadow stimulates a sense of adventure and contains the darker aspects of our character, unresolved conflicts and unexpressed emotions. It consists of all the bad things that people did to us, all the bad things we have ever done to other people, trauma, illness, fears, etc. It also contains all those latent talents and positive impulses that were discouraged or even banished from our lives at some time on our life path: artistic, musical, athletic, creative talents that were never realized. Any ability we have not developed, or one that has gone unexpressed for whatever reason, is part of the personal shadow, the lost part of ourselves.

4Jung once told a friend that he would rather be whole than wholly good. The personal shadow blocks the creative, compassionate aspects of our personalities. However, our personal shadow is not something to be feared but rather understood. It anchors the soul in the physical, it empowers, strengthens and heals. Through it we

The "shadow" develops spontaneously as part of life's journey and without a shadow the "bright self" (aura) could not exist. Could the branches of a magnificent Oak Tree reach up to embrace the sun, if it's roots were not firmly embedded in the richness of the dark, shadowy, moist earth beneath it? By surviving the storms that shake it to its very roots, the magnificent Oak still provides shade for the weary and branches for the birds. A small acorn fought it's way out of the darkness into the light and using the darkness to support it, it grew tall and strong in the Light. Every tree in the forest has a difficult beginning and from the moment of germination will have to struggle to survive, but collectively all the trees create a beautiful forest to glorify and nourish the earth. Are we not the same?

While joy, beauty, peace etc., have their place in our lives, it is the shadow that gives us the roots to withstand the storms of Life. It is the shadow that provides us with the fuel we need to transmute painful bad events in order to grow. Working with our shadow is a life long process. Just because we emerged healed from one crisis does not mean that the journey is complete. 5As long as we live, we will continue to have unexpected challenges and opportunities to develop wisdom. It is through our ongoing conscious awareness of personal pain that we can learn compassion, forgiveness and love. The final reward is to find meaning to life and to develop a sense of purpose in the greater scheme of things.

of the shadow

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experience a vast range of emotions that enable us to live life to the full. Without it, we would become creatures of habit, stuck in old ways and become like a pool of stagnant water. It is the Shadow that gives depth to life and without it, we would never learn or grow.

When it comes to feeding the Shadow, as Omraam Mikhael Aivanhov says, "Life is perfect at the job. You can cry as much as you like, tearing your hair out in despair and it will have no effect. Life is implacable; no weeping or gnashing of teeth will move it to compassion. When you have an accident, when you are ruined, when your friends, your wife, your children leave you, when you have lost your job or your house has burnt down, then you really have something to think about. It is life that corrects people, shakes them up and nearly kills them, but it gives no explanations. Life on earth is a school and so what you find in school is lessons, lessons on all sides".

This could be the reason why, in his book "More Simplified Magic", Ted Andrews points out that no matter how carefully you may plan a magical ritual or execute it to perfection, there will always be a "40% Unseen" (Life) which could affect the outcome. This could also be the reason why, even though people may do everything right to create a

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- 1 The African Way - Mike Boon - Zebra Publishers
- 2 Tarot Shadow Work - Christine Jette - Llewellyn Publishers
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