
<Insert Fig. 2 on facing page.>

Caption: We develop body armor to protect is from life. We become rigid and unyielding. In order to make changes in life, we have to break down that rigidity and become flexible once more.

INTRODUCTION: Me and My Shadow

as a boy I loved to kick a rock
half buried in the earth out
along the ground
and suck from the damp socket
the shadow
the stone's secret self. We come out
of the ground like this, rolling
as though searching, hoping
to find that fit again.

Richard Messer.

Psychologist C. G. Jung once said that all change is experienced by the ego as a death. It's a long, slow process to develop into the person we are. Abraham Lincoln once remarked that he didn't like a man's face. When his companion criticized him, saying "he can't help his face," Lincoln answered calmly that "after a certain age, every man is responsible for his face." In other words, we are each responsible for our lives; the moral choices we make throughout the course of our lives are reflected in us so deeply that others can see them in our face, our voice, our walk, our every action.

Psychologist Wilhelm Reich's clinical studies confirmed Lincoln's astute observation. Reich found that our bodies are literal mirrors of our souls. Our muscles set in patterns which are indicative of the choices, good or bad, we have made in our lives. We develop body armor to

protect us from life. We become rigid and unyielding. In order to make changes in life, we have to break down that rigidity and become flexible once more.¹

The person we are is the product of many choices which we have made along the course of our life. We each begin with a unique set of possibilities determined by our inborn abilities and our outer circumstances. These provide the material with which we can paint the portrait of our life. However, it's the choices we make in life which actually paint the picture.

Over the course of our lives, each of us has taken paths that others haven't taken. We have each accepted certain ways of doing things because they fit us and denied other ways because they just were not us. Over time, those paths, those choices, have made us the person we are, and that person is less and less likely to change. When we are confronted by a new challenge, we are prone to fall back on solutions which have been hard-won in past struggles.

However, inevitably life presents us with problems which can't be solved with old answers. These are the problems that demand a change in our life. We know it, but resist knowing it. We force an old solution onto a current problem, pretending that, while it might not fit perfectly, it's close enough. Of course it isn't really. We're just applying the ostrich principle of sticking our heads in the sand and hoping the problem will go away. If, through fear or rigidity, we continue this behavior long enough, we begin to cause ourselves real suffering.

It seems too much to expect that we have to change still one time more; after all, haven't we changed so many times before? We feel unfairly treated by life. However, as Robert Green Ingalls said: "in nature there are neither rewards nor punishments—there are consequences." We aren't being singled out for punishment; we are merely experiencing the consequences of our own rigidity. If we choose security over change, we have to suffer the consequences. As Gail

Sheehy summarizes succinctly: “If we don’t change, we don’t grow. If we don’t grow, we are not really living. Growth demands a temporary surrender of security.”²

We can learn how to recognize our own rigidity and how to correct it. It takes honesty and courage, but the rewards are immense. First, the suffering stops. This is the surest sign that we have chosen the right path again: the unnecessary suffering stops. More importantly, new possibilities open up everywhere in our life. Where everything seemed sterile and barren and there seemed no possible answers, now everything seems possible. The possibilities may be scary, because each offers a path that we have never taken before, but it’s a good kind of fear, like the fear that a fine pianist experiences before a concert.

Ged’s Story: Hello Darkness My Old Friend

[Jung] told me that he once met a distinguished man, a Quaker, who could not imagine that he had ever done anything wrong in his life. “And do you know what happened to his children?” Jung asked. “The son became a thief, and the daughter a prostitute. Because the father would not take on his shadow, his share in the imperfection of human nature, his children were compelled to live out the dark side which he had ignored.”

A. I. Allenby describing a conversation with C. G. Jung.³

There is nothing so frightening as facing the darkness within—our inner shadow. We will do almost anything to avoid having to look into the dark places of our soul. And rightly so. The darkness contains much that we mere humans can’t face. There is evil, of course; we’re all too familiar with that, but there are also much more that is neither good nor bad, but merely beyond our human capacity to comprehend. Wonder and beauty and all our future possibilities also lie hidden in the darkness, and far too often in our shortsightedness, we confuse them with evil. When we start to automatically dismiss something as evil when in fact it is merely outside our

normal experience, we should remember the words of poet/painter/religious mystic William Blake: “Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth.”⁴

There is no change that doesn't begin in the darkness of the human soul. We first have to discover an entrance into the darkness, then we have to light a tiny candle in the dark so that we can search for our future self, and finally we have to join with it. And that takes resourcefulness, and patience, and most of all courage.

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Caption: There is no change that doesn't begin in the darkness of the human soul. We first have to discover an entrance into the darkness, then we have to light a tiny candle in the dark so that we can search for our future self.

The necessity for the confrontation with the shadow has been known by all cultures in all times and recorded in their myths and legends. I'm fond of a modern fictional version by science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin. In *A Wizard of Earthsea*⁵, she tells the story of a world where magic still rules and wizards go through years of training at an academy, much as doctors or lawyers might today. One young wizard-in-training, Ged, already realizes that he has powerful magical abilities, which he is chafing at the bit to use. Challenged by another student to demonstrate that power, he determines to raise a spirit from the dead, the spirit of a very great lady who died over a thousand years before. Ged's power is great enough that he succeeds at his task, but in the process a shadowy creature also emerges, a creature of darkness and evil, a creature with no name. Ged has no idea what it is, though something about it is vaguely familiar.

The shadow nearly kills him before Ged is saved by the Archmage Nemmerle, the head of the academy and its greatest wizard. But though he forces the shadow to flee, even Nemmerle cannot return the darkness to its home. The effort is so great that Nemmerle dies afterwards. Though Ged has survived, his face is deeply scarred, and the shadow is loose in the world,

looking for an opportunity to finish what it started with Ged. There is seemingly no way to conquer the shadow because no one knows what it really is or what its true name might be.

*As we will see later, this is one classic way to release the shadow: through our hubris and arrogance. And at this early stage, we have no idea who or what has been released, and certainly don't associate it with ourselves. Though, like Ged, we may find it "vaguely familiar."*⁶

For a long time, Ged wishes for death, sure that he has forfeited his future for the sake of a moment's prideful indulgence. Slowly he resumes his training as a wizard, since there is little else available for him. At least, as long as he remains at the academy, he is protected from the evil he has loosed in the world. Eventually though, he completes his training and goes out into the world, constantly on guard since he never knows when he might once again be attacked.

At least the appearance of the shadow tends to cure us of hubris, and forces us to engage more consciously with the process of our own development. This is a period when one just has to put one foot in front of the other and keep moving, with no idea where the path might lead.

Ged accepts a position as wizard for a small fishing village which has the rare bad luck to be threatened by nearby dragons. While he remains there largely as security against dragons, he also performs the many small chores that a wizard can do for such a community. Though respected by the villagers, he remains a lonely, isolated figure.

The path of inner development is inevitably a lonely one, because there are no outer solutions to our problem. And very few ever follow such a path.

Somehow he does become friendly with one of the villagers, but even that causes him further grief when his friend's small boy becomes desperately ill. While trying to cure him, Ged realizes

that the boy is already dying. In desperation, he sends his spirit forth after the spirit of the boy, into the dark place that lies between the living and the dead. And there he once more encounters the shadowy creature of darkness. Somehow Ged manages to fight it off and return to the human world, where he again lies as if dead for days. The boy is dead, Ged has once more nearly died, and his fear of the shadow is now almost crippling.

The difference here from his first encounter with the shadow is that it comes not from his arrogance and hubris, but from his compassion for another. This time Ged has taken a first step into the nether land that lies between normal consciousness and the world of the shadow. But he is ill-prepared and nearly perishes. Thankfully, few encounters with the shadow have to be so dramatic.

When he recovers, he realizes he is a danger to the villagers as long as he remains with them. Yet he cannot leave without abandoning them to the threat of the dragons. So he determines that he must face the dragons. If he survives, which he doubts, he will then leave. At least if he dies, it won't be due to the shadow.

Up to now, Ged's life after releasing the shadow has been without purpose. He has merely been filling in time waiting for an encounter that might come at any time or at no time. Now, for the first time, he is consciously engaged with a quest; he is trying to achieve a goal which is greater than himself and his personal survival. This is the first great leap-of-faith that we all have to take: the acknowledgment that there is something more important than our own petty concerns.

Ged goes to the island where the dragons live. Attacked, he slays five small dragons—if such a concept as small can be applied to dragons. Then he comes to face the great dragon who is

mother of all the dragons on the island. Dragons are wise, but think and speak in ways that are strange to humans, so Ged has to learn to read the meaning that lies beneath her outer words. She thinks Ged has come to steal her treasure, but Ged insists that he only wants safety for the villagers. The dragon reveals that she knows of the shadow who pursues Ged and perhaps can give him its true name. This disturbs him, as it didn't seem possible that the shadow could have a name. When Ged resists even that temptation, the dragon decides she is tired of negotiating and will simply kill Ged. But Ged has been smart enough during their discussion to deduce the dragon's name. With that name and his wizardry, he has power over the dragon. The dragon is forced to agree that none of the dragons will ever harm the villagers again.

This marks the stage where we successfully face great trial, and win through to a deeper level of knowledge that seems inhuman and amoral. One of the hardest tasks in facing the shadow within us is that the nice, clear-cut black-and-white moral values we have lived with so long are revealed to be inadequate to deal with the difficulties we encounter. Instead we come to face a deeper level of knowledge and morality which doesn't fit comfortably into human categories.

Ged can now leave the villagers in safety and proceed on his lonely way. He has further adventures, each of which increases his powers. Each adventure also brings a further encounter with the shadow, which increases his fear. Eventually there comes a time when he realizes that he can no longer remain the hunted, but must become the hunter. Instead of fleeing from the shadow, he turns and tries to seek the shadow. Though he has no conscious knowledge of where the shadow might be, something in him provides the path. Each time he approaches the shadowy figure now, it is the shadow who flees, reduced to setting traps for Ged in his wake. But Ged continues to pursue the shadow past the ends of the earth, to seas where no one has ever sailed.

As long as we run from the shadow, denying any relationship with us, we have no chance of finding the treasures it has to give us. Hopefully reading this book will help the reader to turn and face their own shadow without having to follow quite so circuitous a path as Ged does. But regardless of when and how we face the shadow, it will always be “past the ends of the earth,” on “seas where no one has ever sailed.” This is because the shadow problem demands a unique solution from each of us.

Eventually there comes a time when there is nowhere further to flee and the time of confrontation arrives. The shadow takes on many forms as it tries to subdue or elude Ged, but Ged stands fast, holding forth a wizard’s staff glowing with light. The final moment arrives when Ged speaks the shadow’s name, and the name is Ged!

Ged reached out his hands, dropping his staff, and took hold of his shadow, of the black self that reached out to him. Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one.⁷

Having done so, Ged was once more whole and well and began his true journey, which would make him the greatest wizard of all.

All the wonders and mysteries of the shadow are finally revealed. When we finally realize that we are the shadow, and the shadow is us, we become incredibly expanded. There is a beautiful passage in the Bible that fits this revelation: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”⁸

This book is about the shadow contained in each of us, and why, like Ged, we must each join with our shadow in order to become whole. In our study of the shadow, we will be drawing

heavily on the work of famed depth-psychologist C. G. Jung, but the reader need not fear that this will be too technical. We are talking about things that concern each and every one of us. If occasionally we have to use a psychological term, you can be sure that we will bring it down to earth and show just what it means in our lives. Along the way, we will come to understand each part of not only Ged's story, but of many other shadow stories as well: stories from real people's lives, from the Bible, in fairy tales or legends, or from modern fiction. No matter what form the protagonists might take, all are ultimately heroes, since there is no way to confront the shadow without becoming a hero in the process.

Introduction - Notes

1. Wilhelm Reich, *Character Analysis*, 3rd edition (New York, Simon and Schuster, Touchstone, 1972). Also see Ken Dychtwald, *Body-Mind* (New York: Jove Books, 1977), for summary and updated information on Reich's ideas.
2. Gail Sheehy, *Passages* (New York, Bantam Books, 1977).
3. A. I. Allenby describing a conversation with C. G. Jung, in *C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*, William McGuire and R. F. C. Hull, editors (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series, 1977), p. 158.
4. William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", in Northrop Frye, Ed., *Selected Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (New York: Modern Library, 1953), p. 125.
5. Ursula Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968).
6. Throughout this book, my personal comments are indented and in italics. I've also indented and italicized dreams. In a few cases, where things might get confused, such as my discussion of Jacob's struggle with the mysterious stranger in chapter two, I've used clearly contrasting type formats.
7. Quotation from Ursula Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, p. 179.
- 8.1 Corinthians 13:11