

# DISCOVER YOUR SHADOW

Empowering Healing Through Understanding

## Who am I?

At times, I can turn inwardly and ask the question 'Who am I in this moment?'. Sometimes I feel solid and fully in my body. Other times I feel a whisper, a haze of a residual what was me gradually fading away into a nothingness. It is at times like these that it can be incredibly scary to experience nothingness as the experience beyond two opposing states of being and not being unveil itself.

'Who am I?' can be such a triggering question when transitioning from a previously known part of yourself to an emerging persona that is no longer tied to previous triggers and reflexes from dissolved traumas. In these unsettling moments the ashes of the past no longer hold the foundation nor the structures from which the coping strategies of a previous ego state can reside.

The internal dissolution of the past produces a clear internal void which was previously murky with substance. At least before in its near on physical form it had some life structure to it which, when reacted to in the form of reactive coping strategies, provided it with a semblance of existence.

Once personal identification with the past and our resulting behaviours to its triggers embed itself in our psyche, we can at least determine our own existence in relation to this reoccurring playing out of a symbolic memory and our Pavlovic reactions to it. To paraphrase Descartes, *I react therefore I exist*.

When trauma has been a long term residence in our lives, deep rooted in our personal experience of our world, our habitual reactions to it and unconscious coping strategies can remain operating in the background of our psyche. Over time this can drain our resources of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energy until the moment arrives that we burn out as we are no longer able to maintain the façade as we run on empty.

At this point we can be annihilated to nothingness as the beginning of a physical and mental breakdown ensues to enforce a pause to our destructive cycles and bring about a gradual healing environment in which we can come face to face with the most challenging aspects of our psyche and our past.

Our healing is gently guiding us to a state of humility as we glimpse insights of the root cause of our wound in amongst our tumultuous internal world, which we have continually experienced. The quietening down of the internal psychic storm is brought about with patience and a newfound fathomless depth of compassion for the injured parts of ourselves that have remained loyal and have dedicated their own existence relentlessly to preserve the continued safety of our wounded parts and innocence.

What happens then when the dissolution of the internal coping mechanism no longer exists and the originating memory of the trauma itself is released into the ether of our psyche no longer reachable nor triggering? At this point a void is reached, which is vast, unknown and unsettling. Like walking blindfolded in a pitch dark empty stadium we search for a light to help navigate ourselves out of this barren internal landscape.

In *Healing The Shadow* the wound of the Action Taker archetype is centred around a person feeling that they do not exist, that they are not safe to exist as a separate individual and that they do not have the right to be who they really are, their true authentic self.

Here then lies the glimpse of a new beginning, a new foundation from which a person can begin to form a new psyche with which to navigate the feelings of void in their life. What is interesting is that the processes based with bringing healing to a wounded Action Taker is based on identifying boundaries that have been crossed by others using this archetype's gateway emotion of anger. Yet if a person is heavily deflated in their wound, their ability to experience anger is diminished as it can feel very unsafe to connect to this emotive state especially if they think that it threatens their connection with significant people in their lives.

What then, if instead of assessing the boundaries we have in place or don't have in place with people in our lives, we focus on the boundaries that we have in place with life itself? Can this change in perspective create an opportunity to firm up a persona with which to go into battle and then communion with life itself?

It does bring about the question as to whether there is a distinction between 'life' and our 'Self', whether these are separate or whether these are one. It is at this point that we enter the realms of non-duality theories and experiences. What if the experience of the void is the experience of the absence of duality, the world of opposites to one of merging with all?

It can be scary to give thought to this especially as it breaks down the patterns of old thinking and beliefs. To experience ourselves as merged at a singular point with life in our awakened state can shake the root of our previously understood identity right to the depth of its core.

To emerge from the experience of nothingness and every thingness into a singular existence operating in the field of life, requires an ability to permit the shattering of all the personal belief structures which our ego was previously wedded to. This in itself can feel like an ego death and with it the heightened states of anxiety and panic attacks can ensue together with all the overwhelming and alarming physiological symptoms which are screaming that you (or at least a part of you) are about to be annihilated.

Acceptance is key in transitioning these states of two world apart experiences and perspectives. Acceptance of our existence in all its brokenness, in all its unjust experiences and all its rawness. Acceptance of our wounds and the courageous parts of us that have continued to look out and after our fractured and injured younger parts.

From here, we experience the portal for change or at the very least exchange: Pain for love; Aversion for compassion; Rejection for inclusion; Avoidance for acceptance. Joseph Campbell points to the way "We must be willing to let go of the life we planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us."

This can be a frightening even to consider let alone action and requires trust and faith in life itself and in ourselves as we tread this untrodden path, which is moving away from 'what was' to 'what is becoming'. However, as Liz Smith suggests "*If you don't place your foot on the rope, you'll never cross the chasm.*"

*"I will love the light for it shows me the way; Yet I will love the darkness for it shows me the stars."* O G Mandino

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