

# INTRODUCTION

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The Art of Darkness is the title that soul gave to this work. Having lived and suffered with soul over many years, I have learned that when soul leads, one follows. I exchanges to one because in the dialogues and conversations, by arguments and wrestlings, and with lovings and ecstasies, I imperceptibly becomes one; that is, the movement into depth constructs a bridge that enables the release of the personal into the impersonal.

The year's journey with soul flourished using the technique of Active Imagination that Carl G. Jung rediscovered in his explorations into psyche. I, or ego, stands its ground and defends its territory that the ego believes is its sole prerogative that is the most powerful force in the psyche. Ego's antagonistic nature must open enough to acknowledge the existence of a larger, greater, truer Self, even when it is unwilling to concede to what is the actual reality living in and living psyche. Jung called the Greater or Higher Self, the True Self, Archetypal or Primordial Self, depending on whether he was describing its functioning or its essence in the psyche.

Constellating the ego-Self axis begins the necessary bridge building between the two. These events must become a process, a continuous circulation of energies. Why? Most often, they experience one another as continuous warfare, somewhat like a civil war. At other times, once the bridge is secure and ego realizes that the I and ego, through painful whiplashing experiences, are not synonymous, and that it is not all or even the most prominent part of consciousness nor the power, neither sun nor moon, in the psyche, the two can dance and embrace. Ego can begin to flow and reconcile itself as it yields its rigid and defensive grips on the I. The fiction of the ego, where it thought it was the light of being, is revealed to be, as Dr. Jung explained, the darkest part of the psyche.

Ego's journey from I to one has the characteristics of loosening of the bounds that bind the ego which make it a prison for the person who is experiencing it. The experience appears to and has the feel of being while giving off an intuitive uneasiness of being fake, masklike, artificial, and inauthentic. Ego believes that it is real and that it knows and so staunchly refuses to engage or bargain or even acknowledge any other existence in the psyche.

Ego never evolved the skill of eyes that would allow it to function well in the presence of soul who is an intimate of the darkness, itself. Because of the encounters between ego and the Self, or one of its innumerable manifestations or intermediaries, like a daemon, such as soul, the Self presents to ego with its stubbornness, blindness, darkness, and ignorance, pathetic inability to exist in a vivifying and vigorous outpouring of life into the bowl of humanity. Ego realizes that it is not I; it is one among many and far less omnipotent and omniscient than the Self. Loosened from its perch in the cage it and we build, and forget we build and blame it on family, others, spouse, fate, fortune, ego begins to see that it represents but one aspect of the being of existence, and it hasn't a clue as to that mystery.

As a result of the continual testings over years and even decades of struggle, engagements, strife, sword battles as well as embraces and loves, the active imagination process articulates a

basic fundamental landscape of the psychic world: the I and ego are not synonymous; the dance is the movement from the very personal battlefield where everything that ego does is right and honest and never questionable into an impersonal ambience where some ambiguity, ambivalence, and resilience enters the space of identity where the ego had lived and built its home and claimed it as conquered country, where it declares that it is the Truth.

The space of identity, the liminal space, is a space of threshold or permeable boundary area, where the Greek god, Hermes has so much skill in communication and winged message to and from soul that is of practical use. In this space is where ego and the image, voice, representative of the Primordial Self live and vie for the love of who you are, or you may see that the space of identity, the One Mind, to use the Zen phrase, is an empty space, where you arise every moment, open, without an fixed identity, as you live the No-Self.

Years of confrontations and engagements along the axis of ego-Self, dispels the myth to the ego that it is not the mind. Moreover, ego discovers another myth: it is not the body nor identical with the body. Ego and body no longer are synonymous as awareness or soul or awareness and soul pulls one deeper and deeper to live where you are in boundary area trying to discern what is real and what is not real.

Ego and Self you discover were always one, with ego one important manifestation of the Self: the journey is the name given to the experience, voice, and space of discovery. You lose what you never were, an ego, and take on more spacious identities, until you realize that your true nature is unfixed, unstuck in form, is everything, for that is what the mind does, every moment, and you are that which the mind becomes: you are the Mind. You are free and spontaneous to be any identity; you the reality of the manifestation of oneness of what everything is every moment. Free you let oneness go and be the thing and being you are and live just what is. Emptiness and love are one breath like lovers in eternal embrace and as no-self manifests as no-you, ocean as wave, you use the boat of the ego to be in the world and not of it though you buoy as the world itself.

Ego and Self were never apart from the very beginning. The ego was a fiction of a fiction, our cultural artifact of a body, as if we are not energy and subtle from the earth up. We have used metaphors to describe how this operates in cultural and individual realms. Metaphors are language inviting itself as image, as alive, as the soul of what Mind is. We could say ego is the darkest place on earth so that Self perforates letting in light and letting out darkness. Alternatively, to open the dark surface to the light inside of the ego that was there all of the time. Ego is a buoy; Self is an anchor. Ego is a planet; Self the sun. Ego is reflection that thinks it is the mirror; Self is the mirror that lets ego be what the mind believes is required to operate in the world, without being the world. We can go on and on. Metaphors are ways to talk about the absolute, what cannot be conceptually grasped: they are the images and scenes, which like dreams, are us, and since we are what we are not, how else describe the emptiness, the vast space, the eternal now, the unbelievable, the ungraspable by Mind, for how can Self grasp itself, except by waking up to itself through us.

I will let the journeys and conversations speak for themselves, but some background on Active Imagination, soul, and my life may sculpt a way into the primal material that follows this

introduction.

First, I had many years of experience using Active Imagination and dialogues. I was not a beginner; I knew the risks and possible rewards of a yearlong encounter though the depth of the despair and ferocious embodiment because of my resistance was extremely acute at times.

When I initially discovered Jung's discussions of Active Imagination, I researched the methods and images as much thoroughly as deeply as possible. I found Robert Johnson's Inner Work the best guide in learning and walking through the process that put it into the context of a life of depth and fullness. Barbara Hannah in Encounters with the Soul deals extensively with active imagination, and I found it extremely informative and useful.

Active imagination makes conscious not only shadow materials but complexes and archetypal materials as well. One needs to know how to integrate the materials and struggle endlessly with the primal material. It is the drudgery of wrestling day after day until you see the hopelessness of hope: you begin to see the fictions for what they are, and the feeling of coming unglued is quite correct as you are being unglued from unconscious material. Soul initiated me into the art of darkness until it dawned in me that I am the art being created, an art in constant flux yet conscious of the creative activity creating it and me. The art aids in absorbing and emulsifying the primal materials so that you see the figures of light of the mind, i.e. complexes and archetypal energies, as separate entities, no longer identifying as the figures. Trauma figures do not go away as they are energy conglomerates. These figures are extremely difficult to assuage or tear apart. However, giving them a language, a new alphabet, out of the very experience can at times allow the stretching of the glue.

It is not just that the "unconscious" turns toward the "conscious" the face the consciousness shows to the Self. The conscious mind projects onto the unknown, a manifestation of the absolute, that darkness that it is and does not comprehend, and desperately seeks to control or deny or demolish and kill. When none of the devices work, the disaster is then called "life," "human," "fate," "catastrophe," obscuring the cause and effect: we, then, are not life, human, fate, nor catastrophe. The face of the consciousness is the reflection of the unconsciousness: it sees demons in the mirror not because there are demons in the mirror but because consciousness created the demons and mistook what it created for what is real. There is no Dark Self; what operates is the dark ego. Consciousness, also, thinks its loss, disaster, fire, suffering, illusion is actually what it says it is.

What would happen if the I embraced the unconscious, bargained with it, danced with the unknown, and learned to be in the unknown and ambiguity without grabbing for a gun? What would the effect be if the I dialogued and gave the unconscious attention, respect, trust, embrace, and love as well as the benefit of the doubt? What if I left behind all of the beliefs, those ideas created in the mind and so never tested for their truth, and venture in to meet the absolute, the figures of inner life or numinous energies, without personifying them as enemies and demons? The ego is not an enemy here; nor is the Self the villain.

We have no permanent identity. Our thoughts function well when we use them without believing them to be true. Suffering ensues when we believe them, especially when we believe

them to be who we are. When we realize that we are the Self, not the ego, and begin to live from that space as we see ourselves are created every moment, we are the face we are looking at and it is space.

A key to the effectiveness of the practice of active imagination is in the changes it brings about in the form of calmer and more aware expressions, of the ability to grapple with primal material and cohere it, and of knowing that you are where you need to be. The wrestling, boxing, love, and reconciliation in the conversations become a part of your makeup, changing your life into deeper and deeper ways of being in existence. You don't know where you are going, nor can you control it; you can be there to be the going and be the life that you missed. It is your choice you discover, and the choices have consequences. The method can have a profound effect as seething and savoring, salutary and salubrious effects. Joy could not be born out of such lovemaking on a battlefield until you realize to your astonishment that you are the battlefield and your lover is making out of the heat of invisible rubbings sheer joy. Moreover, the making is what you find you are being done to and that you realize is what soul's tells you that you have the talon to hold and use for soul's calling.

Second, soul is the personification of psyche; it is the wholeness of psyche alive, aware, and attuned. It permeates like wind every soil and part of being. Its long history still does not pin it down, as it thrives as amorphous, ambiguous, not eternal yet immortal or vice versa, dead souls as live souls and live souls as dead souls; there are as many definition of this most volatile and depressive and encompassing of seemingly native figures of psyche. That is, it is not an invasion of archetypal energy in the form of an image or figure or magnetic materials. So it has been described as divine and not divine, as substantial and as non-existent, as essence and as process, as invention and as the basis of who you are and the purpose and meaning of your life on earth.

The multitudes of ambiguities make it ideal to be in congress with and in conversation with. Since it is never empirical but is not definable to any shape, size, or vision, can be anything. Anything and anyone can be attributed to it and have been; as useful and ever present to grasp in a mood of Keats' Negative Capability. The non-conceptual absolute is beyond words and speech, even if any spoken word is a thousand miles away from the reality of the absolute, the closest we can get to in image and speech is, perhaps, the soul, even divine soul, without falling into belief systems of God, Spirit, Divine, heavens and hell, etc.

Marie-Louise von Franz, the insightful Jungian analyst and scholar, shows another way into the reality of soul and what function it performs in the psyche. In her analytical work on the Alchemical Active Imagination, she discusses a text by the sixteenth-century alchemist and physician, Gerhard Dorn, that is germane to our discussion:

*...the experience of the Self is expressed as one's innermost soul, which is touched by the dynamic aspect of the God image. It is that which quiets and gives peace to this kind of apelike dissociated*

*activity of our body and mind, and then suddenly two springs of water come from the depths and create a flood which covers everything with sea water, drowning the dragon. ...through meditative concentration and introversion the unconscious begins to flow. The springs of the dream life, of the objective psyche, start flowing again in contrast to the flickering restlessness of our conscious mind, and appease it. ...this constant repetition (as Dorn says) and devoted concentration on the inner life of the soul, something is born within one, namely, a relatively constant realization of the Self.*

(SEE PP. 48-49; SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR DETAILS OF THIS, AND OTHER, WORKS ON ACTIVE IMAGINATION.)

So large and voluminous, universal and unique, all and nothing, one and myriad things, internal yet external, or all one-- these amorphous and embraceable attributes of soul gives you room, diving space, a way to free yourself from ego in you longing for wholeness.

The history of soul as a counterweight to spirit has often been observed by scholars and thinkers, as the work of James Hillman shows, and gives grounding to ethereal nature of spirit. It is easier to dialogue with soul than with God. At the same time, soul is such a useful expression of the psyche as an experiencing body and mind that it has much more flexibility than having active imagination dialogues with God, gods, complex, archetype, mythological figures, and persons, other inner guides, or power animals. Any of the above could have been my antagonist and lover, my other. Soul gives flexibility and latitude in what can appear for when you dialogue you do not know what will be said or from where it comes. You never would have thought or said what soul spoke to you. You know when that happens that it is authentic.

Another virtue of soul in what Jung called the "individuation process," which is finding your life's purpose driven by the desire for wholeness, is that she demands truth, authenticity, fiery seeing and walking on the hot coals of life. She wants you open to life and to the embrace of all of life without flinch and without pity. Humans invent this pity and connivance for themselves because they think that living on this earth is such a raw deal, and it is, and so they invent religions and denial and idea of death. Soul will have none of it; soul's visions and love will not permit you to escape and will not let you take anyone's word, belief, desire, craving, suffering to hide or not

see what soul wants you to see.

Journey as the soul defines it is not as it is told in the literature of soul. The wholeness of soul's calling pulls deeply out of you what is already there and what soul shows and experience to you. You did not know these experiences and visions existed until you began living in the depth of soul. Your goal in life is not to be a success at your career, in anything, not to have a goal. It is much more demanding, expansive, illustrative, and creative: soul's calling is ego's relinquishment to the Self that your creative and gifting energies must be so much larger than body and soul. You at the end do not recognize who you were, who or what you are, and you leave the future to its own doing for soul wants your love and desire for her to be the incarnation of the vision she has given you to sing out into the world, as the world, as the very reality seen with the eye.

Third, my resistance to and refusal of soul were palpable. I did not want to live a soulful life; I already had been born out of an experience so awful madness was how I stayed sane, and yet the decade long experience paled beside those who died and experienced far worse than I ever did or imagined I did. Yet, soul insisted and invited me into my life, to look fully open eyed, to open third eye. Soul's invitation was what I most desired in my life, soul's life, that I had no clue what that meant but feared it would mean the end of a career and a job, a different life, an opened heart, an acceptance of all that I had rejected in life. I feared a true education. I had spent so much of my youth trying in pursuit of education, reason, and imagination with study of history and mythology as well as by writing plays and poetries to try to discover how and why the world ran the way that it did. I found the heart full of the power and slaughters of human beings of one another. For I knew and knew I knew but refused any way to acknowledge what Zen kept pointing to: the answer was within me, any change in the world came because I changed and that frightened me. What if I had to jump off a cliff, as any number of Zen koans said I had to though I didn't realize at the time that I was the cliff that I had to jump off of and that I had to keep on falling fresh into the beating mind and swing door heart.

Not wholehearted, not totally trusting, not fully committed, still too intellectually tin eared, still unwilling to be one with life and with my experiences and what was living me, not wholly open to whatever comes, not untied enough from my body, not willing to see soul, all of soul, and to experience completely soul and what she desired of me and the love she was of me that I had never imagined existed let alone would ever experience as the vibrational being of being alive.

Life was soul alive. The only way to swim was to get wet. Soul's invitation was one I could not refuse, yet I had a choice. Love, even when you didn't know you breathed it every day, is forgiving enough to provide a choice though you had no clue as to what was going on at the time. You go with a don't know mind, just like life that is living you, there to be experienced if you are ready to get wet and swim, even with the image of drowning, just as you had done so often in your life.

Welcome to the adventure, join me for what soul described as the most dangerous journey of my life, one that already had had numerous and perilous experiences, resistances and wrestlings, refusals and giftings. Come joy with me. Welcome to the unknown, come dressed with your open mind and let it play you as a musical instrument.

A brief Afterword follows the journey. It will elaborate on the effects of the years' journey

with soul on my life and how it changed forever what I do, am, was, can be, imagine, love, suffer, joy, thrive, give, share, and believe or not believe.