

The Portrait of the Artist as his Own Shadow

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The "shadow" according to Jung, is the dark side of the soul, containing those psychic components with which we prefer to have no contact. However, such contact is vital for a full and normal development of the personality. Most of the theories about the shadow (or alter ego, or Doppelgänger) concern the moral aspect of personality, or, further, the conscious vs. unconscious aspect, and in any case, they explain the phenomenon through the dichotomy of light and darkness.

The present article briefly surveys Plato's and Jung's theories about the concept of shadow, and suggests to view the shadow through the possibility of a transitional space, where dichotomies are abolished and contradictory phenomena can exist side by side without excluding one another. The work of art, or better: the act of creating such works, is the space where these contradictions (light and darkness) can live side by side, and moreover, be given a new dimension of existence.

This possibility is being examined through Andersen's fairy tale "The Story of my Shadow". Although the story aims mainly at supporting the dichotomy of person vs. shadow, in the course of the plot there is a reference to the possibility of bridging between person and shadow, lighted and dark, through the territory of art. Although this possibility fails in the story, and is not intensively developed in the text, it can still serve to illuminate the assumption implied in the story, that the artistic mission can be realized only if one has a constant and authentic contact with its own shadow, no less than with his lighted aspects.

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