

Jung, Shadows and Your Potential

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is.

At all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions.

— Dr. Carl G. Jung

In 2006, Ted Haggard was considered one of the most famous Christian conservatives. He also had great political power and advised the President and other politicians. Millions watched him as an exemplar of the values of the Christian right. In November of 2006, however, this all came crashing down when a male prostitute came forth and said he had known the male minister for three years as "Art," a drug user and sex client. Prior to all of this, Haggard had been someone who spoke out against drugs and homosexuality. This is very similar to a 1980's scandal involving Jimmy Swaggart:

In 1986, Swaggart exposed fellow Assemblies of God minister Marvin Gorman, who had been accused of having an affair with another pastor's wife, who was at the time undergoing counseling with Pastor Gorman. Some said this was done out of fear that Gorman was taking away from Swaggart's audience and donations. Gorman was based in New Orleans and was adding stations throughout the southern region and was beginning to add stations on the west coast and the northeast. Gorman was also in the planning stages for a weekday telecast. Once exposed, Gorman was defrocked from the Assemblies of God and his ministry all but ended.

The following year, Swaggart exposed fellow Assemblies Of God televangelist [Jim Bakker's](#) sexual indiscretions and appeared on the [Larry King Show](#), stating that Bakker was a "cancer in the body of Christ." He and similarly-minded Baptist evangelist [Jerry Falwell](#) investigated Jim Bakker and eventually uncovered his indiscretions. In 1987, Jim Bakker's ministry was falling apart as a result.

As a retaliatory move, Marvin Gorman hired a private detective to follow Swaggart. The detective found Swaggart in a Louisiana motel on Airline Highway with a prostitute, Debra Murphree, and took pictures of the tryst.

http://www.answers.com/topic/jimmy-swaggart#Controversies_and_criticisms

One of the most unusual things I've witnessed in my life is how many of the most religious people have also been the most troubled in many respects and often the most dishonest, perverted, and so forth. Similarly, many of the most seemingly dishonest people in the world who are honest about their "dark sides" are often the most honest and least troubled in the world. What would have happened had Haggard been honest about being gay? What would have happened if Swaggart had been open about his attraction to women? How would the Catholic church be different if all of the priests who were interested in young men had a different outlet for their sexuality?

The point is none of these people ever learned to be honest about how they felt. Instead, they hid this information beneath the surface and created personal identities that seemed completely at odds with what was going on inside of them. There is something very powerful about talking through how we really feel and being open with others about it. There is also something extremely limiting about not talking about what we believe or how we feel about something. When we deny how we feel, we tend to attack and be repulsed by others who represent how we feel. The more you put yourself out there in terms of how you feel, the less likely you are to be affected by your dark side. Most of us are affected by our dark side and it continually wreaks havoc throughout our lives and negatively affects our existences.

Your career and life will begin to change when you acknowledge your own dark side. What would you like to do that you cannot justify? What are you not in congruence with?

Several years ago, I was on a small Greek island taking a vacation alone. I'd been playing pool and so forth with the bartender, Niko, who was also the only waiter of the Hotel since there weren't really any people staying there. I was actually very much enjoying the peace of staying in this hotel when there were hardly any other people. Niko was a really nice guy and very happy. One evening at around 11:00 pm, while I was dozing off to sleep, he knocked on my door.

"C'mon, lets go into town and dance with some girls!" he told me. I got dressed and we walked towards town. We had to cross several large hills and go down numerous dirt paths. He wasn't all that proficient in English, but I was enjoying the adventure regardless. The walk into town must have taken us at least an hour and when we got there, we entered a native Greek bar where locals and others were having a nice time talking and [dancing](#).

I walked up to the best looking girl who wasn't dancing, grabbed her hand, and pulled her out to the dance floor. She didn't speak more than a few words of English. At around 4:00 in the morning, she walked back to the hotel with Niko and I. It was very late at night and we both ended up falling asleep on separate beds in the hotel room, with our clothes on. The next morning around 7:00 am, I awoke and went into the bathroom. Inside the bathroom I saw the girl sitting on the floor. She had taken an entire bottle of shaving cream and sprayed it all over the walls and made various Greek characters. She was laughing in a strange way at what she'd done and appeared to be somewhat delirious. I thought this entire thing seemed really strange but I was tired and went back to sleep. I didn't know if this was some sort of Greek mating ritual or not, and decided I better go along with it.

Around 11:00 am, I woke up again and went into the bathroom. The girl was sleeping on a separate bed. This time, she'd taken all of my shampoo, cologne, and other stuff and emptied it out all over the the bathroom. I decided to get up and go down to lunch. I took a shower without any shampoo and didn't shave, and got the girl up and we walked down to the [restaurant](#) on the beach.

Niko didn't start work until around 5:00, so he was sitting at a table. He was having a great time. He was smoking a cigarette and drinking shots of a Greek liquor called Ouzo. He spoke a few words of Greek to the girl I had brought with me and she answered back to him in Greek. He made an unusual face and I sensed something was wrong. Niko, the girl, and I all sat there and the girl did around 5 shots in less than a few minutes. She seemed to be having a really good time. I had sort of blocked out a lot of what happened in the bathroom. The display she made on the walls of the bathroom had disturbed me, but I still wasn't sure what to make of it. Since she didn't speak much English, I had no way of asking her to explain any of this, either.

"We all have good time last night!" Niko exclaimed, raising a shot glass. "This is how we live in Greece. We have good time!" he told me. He had ordered a giant spread of all sorts of Greek food that was on the table in front of us. He was very excited as he explained one local delicacy to me after another. There was no one in the restaurant except us.

About 20 minutes into our meal, the the owner of the hotel approached the cafe we were sitting in and started speaking to Niko. He appeared to be pretty angry. Niko started speaking to the girl and then she got up and walked away to where I couldn't see her.

Niko and the hotel owner argued back and forth for a few more moments and then the owner left.

"What was that all about?" I asked.

"He said you seem like nice person and does not understand why you threw soap all over his bathroom," Niko said.

I explained that I did not do this and that it was the girl. A few seconds later, the owner who was serving us food came up to me with his wife who had been working back in the kitchen. They started yelling at Niko as well. Apparently, the girl I was with had done the exact same thing in the restaurant bathroom. She had thrown the soap all over the walls and was in the process of emptying the toilet paper canisters all over the bathroom.

Niko explained to me that the girl was insane. I was starting to understand this. What happened next was about the most amazing thing I'd ever seen. The island was very small and there weren't any hospitals. The woman in the restaurant made some calls and after around 30 minutes, several older people from the island appeared, went into the bathroom, grabbed the girl, put her in a car, and drove her away.

"What are they going to do with her?" I asked.

They are going to talk to her for the next few days, or weeks, until she gets better. This is how they handle things around here."

Niko explained that this sort of thing happens with people from time to time. People on the island have sometimes gone crazy and lost their minds and this has been happening for hundreds of years. When this occurs, the people from the village come and they talk to the person as a group for days and days until the person gets better. They sit around speaking to the person as a group and don't stop until they are convinced the person is "cured" of whatever is wrong with them. They ask them thousands of questions.

"All they do is force the person to give honest answers and tell everyone what they are really feeling and what's wrong. Once the person does this, they always get better."

"Will she get better?" I asked Niko.

"Sure, of course. Everyone always gets better."

A month or so after I returned to the United States, Niko sent me a letter and in the letter he talked about the girl and how she had gotten better and was now perfectly normal. Niko said she had moved to the island from a larger city because she had something bad happen with her friends who had died in an automobile accident. Apparently, whatever had happened was so bad that the girl had been drawn over the edge and unable to speak about it. I seem to remember she had been one of the causes of the accident.

What was so incredible to me was how the people of this small Greek Island had learned to cure people over hundreds of years. With no psychiatric hospitals or psychologist, all they did was put the person in a big circle and start asking them question after question until they were able to confront the truth of whatever was wrong with them. This girl hadn't been able to confront the truth, which put her in a position of becoming close to insane.

We respect people in the world who are in accord with and understand their dark sides. We often don't trust people who aren't in touch with their dark sides. We need to be able to talk through our deepest and most profound feelings in order to really be out there in the world. We need to be in touch with these feelings to truly experience the success and power we are capable of. The lesson I got out of this small Greek island and my experience with this girl, is confronting our truths can often save us. What was so fascinating about this experience was that what had happened on the Greek island wasn't a product of business. With only a few thousand people living on the island, they didn't have a huge [medical](#) industry or network of psychologists who would prescribe her drugs or recommend a course of therapy. All they had was the people and they had a way of coming together that cured people. They would get people to confront whatever was hurting them and making them not in accord with the small society they lived in. The society was so small and dependent upon everyone being well that they had devised a "cure" over hundreds of years that actually worked.

Carl Jung describes the "shadow" as aspects of ourselves we're not proud of. A shadow is part of the unconscious mind that contains shortcomings, repressed weaknesses, and various instincts. The shadow contains every part of us that is unconscious, denied, and undeveloped. According to Jung, everyone carries a shadow "and the less embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is." On the island, there was a part of this girl that was brought out by the people then rectified. She hadn't come to terms with something horrible and failing to come to terms with this almost drove her off the edge. In fact, she had almost become insane.

I've known women who were sexually abused by their fathers and didn't even remember it until they'd been in therapy for years. People in situations like this may attempt suicide or cut themselves. They repress incredible feelings and bury them as far as they can. While most people don't have experiences like this, we all have aspects of ourselves and our consciousness which we repress. We blame others for our feelings and try and repress what we really feel.

I've been to various retreats throughout the years in which individuals ostensibly experience incredible psychological breakthroughs which transform their lives forever. Most of these breakthroughs invariably involve bringing feelings from the unconscious to the conscious that have been suppressed. This is done in various ways. It's done by people being placed in circles and yelled at until they confront the truth. It's done by people beating pillows with baseball bats and screaming until

they get to the bottom of the problem. There are multiple ways that people are challenged to confront their unconscious. People suppress many things and yet these things still manage to present themselves. The commonality between what Jung is writing about, the girl on the island, and what occurs at these retreats is people are being forced to be honest with themselves and what's going on beneath the surface.

Prior to being honest with themselves, people's lives are affected unconsciously by their shadows. One of the most common ways we do this is through projection. For example, we project onto other people the parts of ourselves we want to deny. We generally will not readily identify with the characteristic we are interested in denying and, instead, put this all onto other people. People that carry a part of ourselves that we deny make us extremely uncomfortable. People with this characteristic may repulse us. We will be highly critical of them and believe they are against our moral ideals and values. Generally, the things that irritate us the most are those that are parts of our shadow.

One of the most interesting things about the shadow is that it's something that continues to appear again and again in our lives. Your career will never reach its full potential until you learn to take control of your personal shadows and see what affects your life in a negative way. You need to be honest with yourself and understand what you haven't yet come to terms with. You may be shying away from certain types of work, achieving certain things, or repulsed by certain types of work that really represent who you would like to be. You may be interested in being a cook, but feel you need to be a business person because being a cook isn't respectable enough. You may be interested in making money but believe people who make money are evil and so shy away from this. You may be interested in being a farmer, but have negative connotations about what it means to be a farmer. You have no way of knowing what aspects of yourself you're repressing that hold you back. You will begin to achieve more in your career and life when you allow your unconscious to be conscious.

THE LESSON

Come to terms with how you feel and be open about it, and you will be much less likely to be affected by your dark side. Acknowledge your deepest and most profound feelings in order to improve your career and life. Your career will never reach its full potential unless you gain control of the personal matters that negatively affect your life. Allow your unconscious to be conscious and face what you're avoiding deep down to achieve your potential.

<https://www.harrisonbarnes.com/>