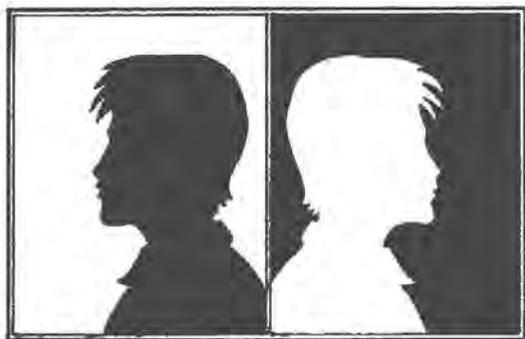


CHAPTER 34

Me and My Shadow

How often have you found yourself struggling to do what is right? One part of you knows what you should do, while another part wants to do something else. Whenever we should do something good, dozens of reasons appear not to do it. It even seems easier to be bad than to be good. How can this internal struggle be resolved? Since we all face such questions, let us examine this issue more deeply.



Good mind, evil mind

Our true desire is to do good, because this is how we experience true happiness. This desire comes from our good mind, which directs our thoughts, words and actions to benefit others. When we act upon this desire, though we may have some discomfort at first, we experience lasting satisfaction and happiness. For example, suppose you have borrowed a lot of money from a good friend. It may not be easy to pay it back, but if you do, in the long run a more trusting and loving friendship will develop.

However, from inside comes another desire that pushes us to do something ignoble and wrong. You may be tempted to cheat your friend and not pay back the money. This selfish desire says, "Oh, he has a lot of money and doesn't need the money, but I do." You think that if you avoid your friend for a long time, he will never ask for the money and you won't have to repay him! So, for a whole year you avoid your friend. He never asks for the money back, and one part of you thinks, "Oh, I was so clever." But the reality is, you also feel guilty about what you have done. You know you have done wrong and your self-respect is damaged. Because of selfishness and stupidity, you have betrayed and perhaps even lost a friend. You feel a sense of regret: "Why did I do something so short-sighted?" Temporary satisfaction is replaced by lasting sorrow. This evil desire, to use others for our own benefit, comes from our evil mind.

Each of us has both good desires and base desires. Although we all want to be a good person, to fulfill our duties and obligations, and to help others, we also have selfish desires. Although we know these desires are wrong, they are still very powerful. Where do these desires come from?

It's all in the mind

The books and magazines we read, the television and films we watch, the music we enjoy and the people with whom we associate — all these have an influence on us through the thoughts they stimulate. Sometimes our mind seems a bit like a radio receiver, "tuning in" to many different channels. We can think about our friends and

enemies, hum tunes, dream about what we wish we were doing, imagine all kinds of impossible situations, carry out imaginary conversations, make plans for the future or relive the past. In fact, it takes concentration to stop one's mind from wandering.

Every image makes an impression, and each affects us differently. Haven't you ever read a book with a noble and righteous hero, felt drawn to that character and thought, "I would like to be like that"? Haven't you sung songs that stirred your emotions and inspired you? When our minds are filled with good images, we tend to have good desires. We want to be good and noble and righteous. We are inspired to

help others. These good desires lead us to do good actions, and when we do something good we feel happy. There is no greater joy than to make another person happy. We enjoy helping and serving others, and we also want to create beauty and be surrounded by beautiful things.

As we follow our good desires, we develop good habits, such as being honest and trustworthy. As these good habits become more and more part of our nature, we develop a good character. Finally, our heart becomes good. We no longer are dominated by bad thoughts or desires. We no longer have to struggle to be good. In fact, being and doing good has become our basic nature, and we cannot help expressing goodness, even at the risk of our life. When others hurt us, we no longer feel resentful or seek revenge. Instead, we love people for their own sake and we care about their well-being. We are happy to see other people's happiness and prosperity, even if they were formerly our enemies.

On the other hand, if we allow bad images to fill our mind, we will have bad thoughts. These bad images appeal to and stimulate the baser parts of our personality. There is a part of us that enjoys listening to and thinking about things that are wrong. For example, part of us likes to listen to gossip and rumors. We especially enjoy, in a rather perverse way that we may be ashamed to admit, hearing bad

things about people whom we don't like or whom we regard as rivals in some way. It is this part of our personality on which sensationalist and yellow journalism thrives. Pornography also appeals to our baser desires. Rather than lift the spirit with a vision of unselfish love, it fills the mind with lustful thoughts and desires. Although we know it is wrong, we experience an evil joy from indulging in such thoughts. We imagine doing things we know are wrong, even though we may never intend to carry them out. All these evil thoughts and desires, though, are eventually manifested in some way. With such thoughts, we are beginning to create our own hell. In such a state we cannot love, and, as Fyodor Dostoyevsky said, "Hell is suffering from an inability to love."

Furthermore, evil desires lead to the formation of bad habits, such as being lazy, rude and ill-mannered. As we follow our bad habits, our character is gradually corrupted too. We become dishonest, and may acquire vices. Toward the end of this downward path, our heart becomes evil. We may dwell in resentful thoughts and feelings or derive a perverse joy from destroying beautiful things. We may relive arguments we have had, in which we imagine ourselves hitting or even killing the



other person. An evil smile sometimes is seen on a person's face when he has deliberately hurt someone, and with this kind of character we are secretly and maybe even openly joyful when something bad happens to someone we envy. In the end, such a person may become a murderer.

The great Russian mystic, St. Nilus of Sorsky, showed that whether we win the struggle to control our passions and vices depends on how we react to the various thoughts that enter the mind.

At first, a thought comes to us as a pure appearance. This appearance is neutral and sinless because it does not depend on us. Then we begin to discuss this thought. This may already be sinful if the thought is evil. We must resist the evil suggestion by opposing it with good thoughts. The next stage is consent, when we accept the evil suggestion voluntarily. In one form of consent a person not only willingly accepts evil suggestions but also is ready to perform them, only stopping because he is prevented by circumstances. This is very sinful. The next stage is capture. In this case a person continually thinks of his evil desires and is enslaved by them. He still may return to virtue but not easily. The last stage is passion, when a man willingly and continually surrenders himself to evil suggestions and they become his second nature.

—From *Russian Mystics*, by Sergius Bolshakoff

The inner struggle

Within us, then, are two different, irreconcilable aspects of character. Even the best things we do are often slightly tarnished by some selfish motivation. And yet even the worst person has a conscience that doesn't let him sleep easily at night. To some extent the good and evil aspects of our nature coexist. But if we try to follow the way of goodness, a war erupts within us. Within ourselves we cannot deny that there is a terrible contradiction. St. Paul, one of the greatest Christian evangelists, lamented about his own inner struggle:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do. ... For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing.

— Romans 7:15-19

This inner conflict destroys us: We seem to be one person, but we have contradictory purposes. We are like a cup with a hole in it, made for a purpose that we cannot fulfill. Likewise, our true nature is to be good and happy, but because of this contradiction, we destroy our own happiness.

The war within each individual mind has led to the conflict in the world. When we are not at peace with ourselves, it is easy to come into conflict with others. Woe to anyone who crosses our path when we are in a bad mood! The conflict between men and women, the conflict between groups, the conflict among nations — all are reflections of the conflict within me. We find conflict in the family because families are made up of contradictory individuals.

What to do about it?

Having a designer wardrobe, enjoying a prestigious and well-paying job, or being admired for our cleverness may satisfy our desires temporarily, but none of these will ever help us to overcome our evil mind and therefore cannot be the source of





deep and lasting happiness in our lives. How many rich, famous, powerful and intelligent people have lived a miserable existence, even to the point of taking their life? We can never satisfy our deep, internal *need* and desire for inner peace and happiness through external means alone. Quite simply, we become miserable when we live a selfish life.

Real and lasting happiness, on any level in the world, is only possible when we eliminate the seeds of conflict within ourselves by becoming loving and caring human beings who are realizing truth, beauty and goodness in our life.

We should try to understand why we act in ways we come to dislike. It's almost certain that if we don't like ourselves when we behave in a certain way, other people probably don't either.

We must strengthen the good side of our nature. To start with, we have to be careful about what we allow into our soul. We have to guard our senses and not absorb anything that disturbs our mind. Instead, we should fill our minds with good images and thoughts. Every time a bad thought enters our consciousness, we should quickly reject it and think about something good instead. This is often a struggle, but it helps change our consciousness when we read uplifting literature, listen to inspiring music, and even sing songs.

It is also helpful to be completely honest about our thoughts, not just with ourselves but also with a close and wise friend whom we can trust. Telling another person about our bad thoughts often makes us see clearly how shameful and foolish they are, and we may feel it is easier to defeat them once they are no longer secrets.

If we do something wrong, we should confess the misdeed and apologize, putting right any harm we have done. If we can empathize with the other person and understand how we have hurt him, it is much easier to apologize sincerely.

We should make an effort to cultivate good habits and do good deeds, helping others in whatever way we can. For example, when we feel tempted to keep a treat for ourselves and secretly eat it alone, we can immediately take a step toward goodness by sharing it with someone else. In this way we can challenge our evil mind and strengthen our good mind. But always, it is necessary to be open and honest about our thoughts. This is the best way to remain humble and open in our heart and with our friends.

Ultimately, our struggle is between selfishness and love. Although we may think that by being selfish we will profit, this is very foolish. When we are selfish, we are in hell. We are so self-conscious that we are paralyzed and cannot freely give or receive love. Yet we are born for love and to live for each other's happiness. Most of us have noticed that when we are more concerned with taking care of others, understanding and serving their needs and caring about what makes them genuinely happy, the qualities of our bright side shine through and we stimulate the beauty and goodness in others as well. You become the self that you like and that others like as well. When you feel good about yourself, it is far easier to feel good about and care for others. You are genuinely happy.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Much of the story of "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" came to Robert Louis Stevenson in a dream. It tells of a brilliant and respectable scientist called Dr. Jekyll who discovers a drug that splits his personality. After taking it his appearance is altered. The evil side of his character takes over and he becomes Mr. Hyde. The following are some excerpts from Dr. Jekyll's testimony.

I was born in the year 18— to a large fortune, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow-men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honorable and distinguished future. And indeed, the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached the years of reflection, and began to look around me, and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity in life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded them and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I labored, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering. And it chanced that the direction of my scientific studies, which led wholly towards the mystic and transcendental, reacted and shed a strong light on this consciousness of the perennial war among my members. With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily near to that truth by whose discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I, from the nature of my life, advanced infallibly in one direction only. It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognize the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that two natures that contended in my field of consciousness, even as I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved day-dream, on the thought of the separation of these elements.

[Dr. Jekyll discovers a drug that separates the two parts of his nature and he takes a dose.]

The most racking pangs succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death. Then these agonies began swiftly to subside, and I came to myself as if out of a great sickness. There was something strange in my sensations, something incredibly new, and from its novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a mill race in by fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown

but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exalting in the freshness of these sensations; and in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost stature.

[In a mirror] I saw for the first time the appearance of Edward Hyde. The evil side of my nature, to which I had now transferred the stamping efficacy, was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been after all, nine-tenths a life of effort, virtue and control, it had been less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter, and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides (which I still believe to be the lethal side of man) had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay.

That night I had come to the fatal cross-roads. Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair.

The pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, undignified; I would scarce use a harder term. But in the hands of Edward Hyde they soon began to turn towards the monstrous. When I would come back from these excursions, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious depravity. This familiar that I called out of my soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone. Henry Jekyll stood at times aghast before the acts of Edward Hyde; but the situation was apart from ordinary laws, and insidiously relaxed the grasp of conscience. It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone that was guilty. Jekyll was no worse; he woke again to his good qualities seemingly unimpaired; he would even make haste, where possible, to undo the evil done by Hyde. And thus his conscience slumbered.

[One night he goes to sleep as Dr. Jekyll but wakes up the next morning as Mr. Hyde.]

This inexplicable incident, this reversal of my previous experience, seemed, like the Babylonian finger on the wall, to be spelling out the letters of my judgment; and I began to reflect more seriously than ever before on the issues and possibilities of my double existence. That part of me which I had the power of projecting had lately been much exercised and nourished; it had seemed to me of late as though the body of Edward Hyde had frown in stature, as though (when I wore that form) I were more conscious of a more generous tide of blood; and I began to spy a danger that, if this were much prolonged, the balance of my nature might be permanently overthrown, the power of voluntary change be forever forfeited, and the character of Edward Hyde become irrevocably mine. Whereas in the beginning, the difficulty had been to throw off the body of Jekyll, it had of late gradually but decidedly transferred itself to

the other side. All things therefore seemed to point to this: That I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse.

[Jekyll resolves never to take the potion again.]

For two months, however, I was true to my determination; for two months I led a life of such severity as I had never before attained to, and enjoyed the compensations of an approving conscience. But time began at last to obliterate the freshness of my alarm; the praises of conscience began to grow into a thing of course; I began to be tortured with throes and longings, as Hyde struggled after freedom; and at last, in an hour of moral weakness, I once again compounded and swallowed the transforming draught.

I do not suppose that when a drunkard reasons with himself upon his vice, he is once out of a hundred times affected by the dangers that he runs through his brutish physical insensibility; neither had I, long as I had considered my position, made enough allowance for the complete moral insensibility and insensate readiness to evil which were the leading characters of Edward Hyde. Yet it was by these that I was punished. My devil had long been caged, he came out roaring.

[This time Hyde brutally murders a sensitive old gentleman. Jekyll again determines never to take the potion again.]

I resolved in my future conduct to redeem the past; and I can say with some honesty that my resolve was fruitful of some good. I labored to relieve suffering and the days passed quietly, almost happily for myself. Nor can I say that I wearied of this beneficent and innocent life; I think instead that I daily enjoyed it more completely; but I was still cursed with my duality of purpose; and as the first edge of my penitence wore off, the lower side of me, so long indulged, so recently chained down, began to growl for license. Not that I dreamed of resuscitating Hyde; the bare idea of that would startle me to frenzy: no, it was in my own person that I was once more tempted to trifle with my conscience; and it was as an ordinary secret sinner that I at last fell before the assaults of temptation.

There comes an end to all things; the most capacious measure is filled at last; and this brief condescension to my evil finally destroyed the balance of my soul. And yet I was not alarmed; the fall seemed natural, like a return to the old days before I had made my discovery. I sat in the sun on a bench; the animal within me was licking the chops of memory; the spiritual side a little drowsed, promising subsequent penitence, but not yet moved to begin. After all, I reflected, I was like my neighbors; and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active goodwill with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the moment of that vainglorious thought, a qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and the most deadly shuddering. These passed away, and left me faint; then as in its turn the faintness subsided, I began to be aware of a change in the temper of my thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation. I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy. I was once more Edward Hyde.

[From this time on it becomes more and more difficult to return to the character of Dr. Jekyll and in the end he kills himself.]