



The Force of Character: And the Lasting Life

James Hillman

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In his bestselling *The Soul's Code*, James Hillman restored passion and meaning to the concept of identity, arguing that each of us is born with an innate character, the "daimon" or "spirit" that calls us to what we are meant to be. Now, in **The Force of Character**, Hillman brings the idea of character full circle, offering a revolutionary new vision of life's most feared and misunderstood chapter: old age.

"Aging is no accident," Hillman writes. "It is necessary to the human condition, intended by the soul." We become more characteristic of who we are simply by lasting into later years; the older we become, the more our true natures emerge. Thus the final years have a very important purpose: the fulfillment and confirmation of one's character.

Contrary to the current genetic determinism that sees increased longevity as a wasted aberrance created by civilization, **The Force of Character** presents an explosive new thesis: The changes of old age, even the debilitating ones, have purposes and values organized by the psyche. Memory for recent events may falter, offering more place for long-term recollections. A heart condition in later life brings an opportunity to remove blockages from constricted relationships, while changes in sleep patterns allow the old to experience the profound elements of nighttime that we usually overlook. As Hillman says, "Aging makes metaphors of biology."

In this empowering and original work, James Hillman resurrects the ancient, widespread, and socially effective idea of the old person as "ancestor," a model for the young, the bearer of a society's cultural memory and traditions. America disregards old people who aren't young-acting and young-looking. We don't realize that "oldness" is an archetypal state of being that can add value and luster to things we treasure, places we revere, and people's character. When we open our imaginations to the idea of the ancestor, aging can free us from convention and transform us into a force of nature, releasing our deepest beliefs for the benefit of society. For all who read it, **The Force of Character** will be a seminal, life-affirming experience.

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