

Introduction

This book was born early one morning when I awoke from a startling dream. The main feature of the dream was a snake. Snakes in dreams are not that unusual. However, this creature was thousands of feet long and proportionately wide. And, it had *two* extremely ferocious looking heads.

In the dream, I was flying close to the snake's heads, high in the air among the clouds. The beast undulated in a most menacing manner. Its tail was far below on the ground. The two heads had intense, ravenous eyes. Each mouth was wide open, revealing dagger-like teeth and a sharply forked tongue.

In the dream, I also knew that the serpent was extremely venomous. It was obviously capable of annihilating me with no effort at all. In addition, I saw that its power was so great that it could easily swoop down and destroy all of humanity.

Even though I was afraid, I prepared myself to fight. I did so by climbing into a two-headed snake costume, which was going to act as my "battleship." And so, we squared off, ready to do battle, high in the air among the clouds. At that point, I awoke.

For a while, I remained motionless in bed with my eyes closed. Behind my closed eyelids, I still saw the gigantic snake, and I continued sensing its horrific power. Even after I opened my eyes, I continued feeling its deadly presence. I stared at the sky through the open window, watching the clouds drift by.

For me, the dream was, to say the least, unprecedented. Still seeing the snake clearly in my mind, I said to myself, "This probably means something."

As the emotional impact of the dream gradually wore off, I took note of my initial impressions as to the meaning of the dream. Later that day, I consulted books and experts to get additional information as to the possible meaning of the

symbols of my dream. However, I found no reference to extremely ferocious two-headed snakes of monstrous proportions. So, I went back to my strong initial impressions, which were as follows:

- The two-headed snake symbolized duality - the dance of opposites. This idea was reinforced by the appearance of the second snake (me in the costume).
- The humongous size of the snake suggested that the duality in question was not merely one particular pair of opposites. It was the granddaddy of dualities, containing within it all other pairs of opposites.
- The foreboding feeling that the snake was extremely powerful and dangerous suggested that I would either master it or be devoured by it – devoured by the conflicting opposing forces within me.
- The dreaded fear that the snake could destroy me and all people on Earth suggested that the snake not only symbolized duality within me personally, but also touched into the collective consciousness of humanity. This impression was reinforced by the snake's tremendous size and extremely high altitude above the earth - its two heads ready to swoop down on the population below.
- The final impression was that if I tried to overpower and destroy the snake, I would surely lose. The message was, *do not kill it, just understand it*. If this had been an actual snake in the outer world, I would have laughed at such an idea. However, since the snake seemed to symbolize the opposing forces within my own mind, the idea that I could master it through understanding was reasonable.

Duality is Fun, Except When It Isn't

In the days that followed the dream, my mind was flooded with a variety of opposites. I had the notion that duality is beautiful and that it does not have to be synonymous with conflict. I saw a man and woman dancing, rejoicing in their differences; the strength of him delighting in the grace of her, and the grace of her embracing the strength of him. I then had the frightening and exciting notion that *all opposites* can be experienced in this manner.

When inner duality is *not* fun, it shows up as neurosis, which I perceived as the result of opposites at war within the mind. We set them at war with each other by judging one as good and the other as bad. We then identify ourselves with the one that is judged as good and pretend the other does not exist – except maybe in someone else.

The Big Joke

With regard to dancing opposites, the big joke is this: *With any pair of opposites, the side we have judged as inferior is the one that rules us.* This is a commonly known principle, even for individuals who are not familiar with how opposites dance. It is the basis for the cliché, “What you resist persists.”

Likewise, when we recognize both sides of any duality as partners in the dance of Creation, the inner conflict ends. However, it does not die as a soldier on a battlefield. It dies as a seed dies when it breaks its shell and germinates. The sprout is the vision of life wherein opposites make love instead of war. Such a vision leads us naturally to the primordial unity beyond opposites.

Introduction to Forth Edition

As a way of introducing the current edition to *The Dance of Opposites*, I wish to point out that the first edition was called *The Alchemy of Opposites*. I initially wrote the book in response to the dream described above. The dream turned out to be a life changer. After publication of the original book, the torrent of information continued. Furthermore, some of my original ideas would not hold still. They insisted on evolving.

One facet of the evolution was the realization that my work was closely related to the Taoist concepts of Yin and Yang. That relationship should have been obvious to me from the start, but it was not. In fact, during the months that I was furiously writing down all the cool ideas that came to me after my dream, I never once considered the relation of my work to Yin and Yang. Even after Robert Anton Wilson briefly commented on this in his Foreword to my book, it went right over my head.

Yes, I was peripherally aware of Taoism and Yin and Yang. However, I never once focused on their connection to my work. I never said, “Hummm, opposites, Yin and Yang, Taoism, that’s what I’m writing about.”

Finally, after the original book was in print, during a conversation with one of my readers, he casually commented that my ideas were very much akin to Taoism. For a moment, I just stood there, sort of stunned and embarrassed, as if he had just informed me that my fly was open.

“Uh...yeah,” I nodded stupidly.

In retrospect, my oversight is understandable because the ideas I was exploring during the writing of my original book were based, not so much on my academic study of other works, but rather upon personal experience. When the realization finally sank in, I started an intense and prolonged study of Taoism, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture, and the Martial Arts. I was astounded. “Those crooks,” I said, “They stole my stuff – four thousand years ago!”

My initial blindness to the Tao connection turned out to be a blessing. It was a blessing because I was able to contemplate the ideas emerging from my mind, from a perspective that was free of the language and mental constructs of Taoism. I was able to freely explore the dance of opposites outside the box of traditional Taoist thinking.

None-the less, when I finally took the time to study Taoism and its practical applications, it was like coming home. Consequently, I absolutely had to update my book. I also felt compelled to change the title from *The Alchemy of Opposites* to *The Dance of Opposites*. This reflects the understanding that we do not *make* the opposing qualities within us and around us interact harmoniously through an act of will, no more than we can order two individuals to love one another. We simply cultivate the ability to recognize how they naturally dance harmoniously. When we do so, we tend to cooperate with that dance — which invites health and happiness, as the ancient Taoists well understood.

So, what is this current edition all about? As with the previous editions, it incorporates the fruits of my deepening understanding of the subject, while retaining the core

principles and flavor of the original book. For example, in the years since the publication of the original book, political discourse has become increasingly polarized and divisive. Therefore, for the first time in my life, I started paying attention to it. However, rather than getting emotionally pulled into partisan politics, I found myself looking at current events through the lens of dancing opposites. The result was chapter 29 of the current edition, which is called, *The Yin & Yang of Politics*. In addition, I have rearranged, reworked, condensed, and updated the existing material, with the intent of promoting clarity and readability, and to facilitate practical application.

Practical Application

Essentially, there are two ways that you may benefit from this book. One is immediate, and the other is long-term.

Immediate Benefit: Since Creation is a dance of opposites, any aspect of your inner or outer world can be understood more deeply when seen as part of the dance. In that sense, this book is essentially a handbook for understanding various common issues that impact our health and happiness.

Long-Term Benefit: The more deeply we understand the dance of opposites within us, the more we tend to spontaneously cooperate with it. Therefore, the long-term benefit of applying the information in this book is that the reader gradually becomes free from the habit of consciously or unconsciously placing opposites at war with one another. By thus setting the mind free of inner conflict, we deepen our potential for healing and renewal of body and mind. We also tend to be more at peace with the world around us.

Stated differently, the short-term benefit has to do with the way you think, while the long-term benefit has to do with the way you feel. For example, one specific short-term benefit is that you might see the usually hidden contradictions and inconsistencies in the behavior of people around you. A specific long-term benefit is the awareness that any such contradictions that you perceive (and emotionally react to) in the outer world are probably reflections of your own inner

contradictions. That awareness is usually experienced as a feeling. That feeling is commonly called “compassion.”

In other words, you can simply use this book as a handbook for getting perspective on specific subjects or issues that are of interest to you in the moment. In addition, if you make it a habit of looking at life in this manner, your efforts will, more than likely, compel a gradual evolution or transformation in the feeling areas of your mind. The more deeply we see and appreciate the dance of opposites within us and around us, the more we invite the vision of Unity beyond opposites. That vision isn’t necessarily overwhelming or other-worldly. It usually shows up quietly as gentleness and grace.

We will begin our journey by asking a question: What is it about the dance of opposites that makes it so fundamentally important to life? This question is answered in Chapter One.

See book on Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/Dance-Opposites-Ed-4/dp/0982683278>