

Book Review**Review of Deepak Chopra's Book:
The Book of Secrets: Unlocking the Hidden Dimensions of Your Life**

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ABSTRACT

In his book, Deepak Chopra gives us his vision of spirituality and of the reality we find ourselves wedded to. Chopra (page 15) writes: "Every secret in this book goes back to the existence of an invisible intelligence that operates beneath the visible surface of life. The mystery of life is an expression not of random accidents but of one intelligence that exists everywhere." You can find this book at Amazon http://www.amazon.com/Book-Secrets-Unlocking-Hidden-Dimensions/dp/1400098343/ref=cm_cr-mr-title .

Key Words: hidden dimension, spirituality, invisible intelligence, mystery, life, expression.

Chopra (page 21) tells us: "You are not in the world; the world is in you. The only reason that rocks are solid is that the brain registers a flurry of electrical signals as touch; the only reason the sun shines is that the brain registers another flurry of electrical signals as sight. There is no sunlight in my brain, whose interior remains as dark as a limestone cavern no matter how bright it is outside."

I found the best way to read Chopra is in small 30 minute mini-reads, ideally sitting outside in the park with birds chirping in the background, a mere rest spot within my hour long walks that may occur daily. Chopra has a poetic style to his spiritual advice that can be enhanced significantly by background conditions that are beyond the book. A good example is provided by Chopra's (page 43) remarks: "Thinking points the way whenever your mind stops being restless and speculative. On this path, you silence your internal dialogue in order to find clarity and stillness. It takes clarity for your mind to see that it doesn't have to be so driven. Thinking can turn into knowing, which is to say wisdom. With greater clarity your intellect looks into any problem and sees the solution. As your knowingness expands, personal questions fade. What your mind really wants to know is the mystery of existence. Questions knock on the door of eternity, at which point only the Creator can answer them for you. The fulfillment of this path comes when your mind merges with the mind of God."

Chopra (page 31) writes: "An infinite, silent energy field flickered for an instant, experiencing an object (the rose) and the subject (you the observer) without going anywhere. Awareness simply took look at one aspect of its eternal beauty. Its only motive was to create a moment of joy. You and the rose stood at opposite poles of that moment, yet there was no separation. A single creative stroke took place, fusing you both."

Chopra (page 25) reminds us that ego is not the enemy: "Throwing the ego into the dark, making it the enemy, only creates more division and fragmentation. If there is one reality, it must be all-inclusive. The ego can't be thrown out any more than desire can be thrown out." Yet even Chopra's forgiving outlook can confuse the ego when it is genuinely needed; e.g., when "you are stopped at a red light on the way home, but the car behind you doesn't stop and rear-ends you," (page 116). Chopra recommends these personal identifications of self: "This accident was no accident; it's a reflection of myself. This stranger is a messenger. When I find out why this event happened, I will uncover some aspect of myself." When the other driver is discovered to be intoxicated, for example,

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Chopra's critics will point to his gullibility with the issue of ego surrender. Even if some events are found to be random occurrences among many meaningful events, Chopra is not so gullible to accept the advice of a guru without the ever critical ego (at least I hope not). He (page 84) does admit that "manipulators use charm, persuasion, coaxing, trickery, and misdirection." Chopra (page 79) recommends taking the attitude that: "I will put a distance between myself and those who want to hurt me. I do not have to confront them, guilt-trip them, or make them the cause of my self-pity. But I cannot afford to absorb their toxic effect on me, and if that means keeping my distance, I will."

Chopra (pages 111) plays up the term "wholeness", writing that: "Wholeness means including everything, leaving nothing out. At the present we each experience life sliced up into bits of time, bits of experience, bits of activity. We cling to our limited sense of self to protect the slices from falling apart. But it's impossible to find continuity in this way, hard as the ego tries in its struggle to make life hang together. Wholeness is a state beyond personality." But "wholeness" carries the connotation of web of life, the dynamic flux unto itself, and of system theory, and these views can only be a misplaced caricature if taken literally. For example, Ken Wilber called these views a "flat land" perspective, while having been critical of Chopra in particular. I think Chopra can find a way beyond this criticism, by sticking to his poetic spirituality in its simpleness, and while leaving system thinking in its proper place.

One of the high points in Chopra's book is his treatment of evil. He (page 126) tells us that "evil depends completely on one's level of consciousness." And Chopra (page 138) writes of the repressed shadow: "the shadow has grown used to being repressed, to access this region of the mind doesn't happen easily. Nor is direct assault effective. The shadow knows how to resist; it can slam the door and hide its dark energy even deeper." He (page 141) writes: "The fleeting gap between sensation and interpretation is the birthplace of the shadow. When you go into the gap and see how intangible everything is, the ghosts begin to disperse... Evil is born in the gap. The gap isn't anyone's private possession. The gap contains collective responses and collective themes. When an entire society accepts the theme of 'the outsiders' who cause all the trouble [us versus them], then evil has everyone for a father and mother." Chopra (page 142) writes, "I don't accept that evil people exist, only people who have not faced their shadows."

The shadow, in fact, is found to be our lover and helper. Chopra (page 146) tells us: "That's why the words don't matter. Once you access the feeling, the real work of release can begin. You need to go on and feel it completely, ask for release, and keep going until you get a new bit of self-understanding. It may take practice before any real deep release comes to you, but step by step the walls of resistance will come down. The shadow is subtly involved in everyday life. It is never so hidden that you cannot bring it to light."

Chopra (page 183) writes: "In clarity you know that you are not a puppet - you have released yourself from the unconscious drives that once fooled you into thinking that you were acting spontaneously."

Chopra (page 198) writes on being mindful: "You catch the present moment without words or thought. Few things are easier to describe and harder to do. The crux of the matter is time. Time is as slippery as that blessed moment before you say 'I'm happy right now.' Was that moment really fleeting or is it eternal? "

References

Deepak Chopra, 2004, *The Book of Secrets: Unlocking the Hidden Dimensions of Your Life*. Harmony.