



# A Fractured Mind: My Life with Multiple Personality Disorder

*By Robert B. Oxnam*



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**The harrowing, insightful, and courageous account of a prominent man's struggle with multiple personalities**

Robert Oxnam was a high-profile, successful man: A renowned scholar and president of the Asia Society, he appeared frequently on television and traveled the world as a sought-after expert. But what the millions of people who'd seen him didn't know--what even those closest to him didn't know--was that Oxnam suffered from multiple personality disorder. It was only after an intervention staged by family and friends, in response to frequent blackouts and episodic rages assumed to be alcohol-driven, that he sought treatment with Dr. Jeffery Smith; the first of his eleven personalities emerged in a session in 1990. After years of treatment, he has integrated them into three: Robert, Wanda, and Bobby, who take turns narrating this remarkable, unprecedented chronicle.



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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As a child Oxnam worried about how the fractured Humpty-Dumpty could be fixed. This nursery rhyme later became a metaphor for his "fractured mind." Oxnam was outwardly a successful China scholar and president of the Asia Society. Inwardly, however, he struggled with self-doubt and inadequacy, blackouts and alcoholism. He sought treatment from psychiatrist Jeffrey Smith, who, during a session in 1990, found that Oxnam's problem was not alcoholism but multiple personality disorder when Tommy, an angry boy, emerged as the first of Oxnam's alternate personalities. Eventually, 11 personalities emerged, including Baby, who had suffered from severe child abuse. Through therapy, Oxnam was able to put most of the pieces of his personalities together (three remain). In an epilogue, psychiatrist Smith writes that while the disorder is serious and therapy is demanding, the results are usually good. Although the conversations the 11 personalities have with Smith are at times difficult to follow, this touching and powerful account of the "inner world" of the disorder—the power struggles and dialogues among the fractured parts of a person's mind—provides valuable insight into a courageous man's struggle.

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From [Booklist](#)

*\*Starred Review\** Sybil, of course, and a handful of others have achieved a measure of public recognition as a result of books chronicling their lives with MPD--multiple personality disorder, known in clinical circles as DID, dissociative identity disorder. Unlike the others, Asia specialist and public speaker Oxnam achieved public distinction, to say nothing of an impressive list of professional accomplishments, despite the at-times crippling burden of MPD, manifested by no fewer than 10 additional, distinct personalities, or "alters," of himself. Sometimes he was in charge; sometimes not. He was often relegated to the role of hapless passenger as one or another alter drove all of them down a path of profligate eating and drinking, temper tantrums, or adultery. Oxnam doesn't shirk responsibility, but with a father who tolerated nothing short of scholastic, indeed overall, perfection and a drama-queen mother, it seems inevitable that Oxnam developed some sort of mental instability. But add gross physical and sexual abuse at the hands of trusted family members into the mixture of childhood experiences, and there is little remarkable in the fact that this child's mind broke into the walled divisions within what the adult Oxnam calls the Castle, home to his inner selves. A remarkable life that, for all its successes, took great personal courage to survive and to publicly record. *Donna Chavez*  
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Review

"A brave effort to explain how a troubled man found a way to get better." -- *Time*

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**Donald Kelley:**

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