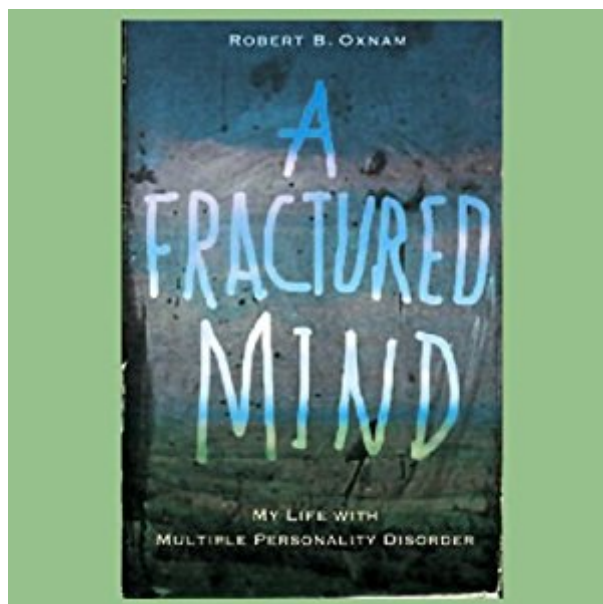


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# A Fractured Mind: My Life With Multiple Personality Disorder



## Synopsis

In 1989, Robert B. Oxnam, the successful China scholar and president of the Asia Society, faced up to what he thought was his biggest personal challenge: alcoholism. But this dependency masked a problem far more serious: Multiple Personality Disorder. At the peak of his professional career, after having led the Asia Society for nearly a decade, Oxnam was haunted by periodic blackouts and episodic rages. After his family and friends intervened, Oxnam received help from a psychiatrist, Dr. Jeffery Smith, and entered a rehab center. It wasn't until 1990, during a session with Dr. Smith, that the first of Oxnam's 11 alternate personalities, an angry young boy named Tommy, suddenly emerged. With Dr. Smith's help, Oxnam began the exhausting and fascinating process of uncovering his many personalities and the childhood trauma that caused his condition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although I don't live under a rock, prior to purchasing "A Fractured Mind," I don't recall having ever heard of Robert B. Oxnam. Having now finished reading his book, I believe I won't have any such trouble remembering either his name or his story. First, I'd like to say that I have deep respect for Mr. Oxnam for going through with making his story and struggles known to the public--myself included. This was a courageous move on his part and I hope there are no regrets for any and all involved in the project. On, now, to the story. For the first section of this book, Oxnam told a lot of--what I thought at the time--standard family background, academic and work-related information, and showcased an obvious alcohol problem. I wondered if I was missing something or if they'd gotten

the name of the book wrong. Once Oxnam began treatment and then therapy for alcoholism, things started to fall into place for me as a reader and I was amazed at how successful this man had become in spite of what I now know were serious mental and physical problems. I've read the book and seen the movie "Sybil" and was expecting this to run roughly the same course: in-depth coverage of the abuse that caused the original and subsequent dissociation, tales of bickering alters and integration, and a somewhat tidy ending. Imagine my surprise and confusion when the trauma Oxnam had suffered was discussed about the middle of the book. I cringed, thinking that all the dirty details would be chronicled throughout the second half; I was wrong. In a savvy move, the abuse was mostly alluded to, with only a few key events mentioned (no salacious content here). What the reader is left with is Oxnam's basic reaction--as an adult--to what happened to him as a child nearly fifty years earlier.

Doctor Robert Oxnam goes on a boat ride near the beginning of this book - one that has the contours of an escape. Yet, in a very real sense this whole story "A Fractured Mind" is a sea voyage and a sea change, an Odyssey in the tradition of Homer's great work. Like Homer, Oxnam is a blind bard until the fragmented pieces of his own soul come home for a reckoning. Before he becomes aware of the other people living inside his skull he is that strange figure caught in a song by the Beatles "He's a real nowhere man". There is something hollow yet implacably driven about his life. He consists of ambitions and cravings as he dashes meaninglessly through the existential void of his life. Compelled to deal with his alcoholism or be destroyed it is only a matter of time before the uncanny something that has bewildered his life manifests one day in his therapist's office as a small boy. Before that there are warning signs like intimations of doom across his life. Why does he suffer these strange "blank spots" in his memories? Most sceptics of Dissociative Identity Disorder irrationally believe that therapists magically create alter egos and memories in their clients - where this profoundly idiotic point of view comes from is beyond me. But in any case Oxnam's therapist does not create the symptoms Oxnam experiences before therapy and before the revelation of the first alter. From the revelation of the first alter Oxnam's life ceases to become a mere wandering or a mere drive for an empty success in his field. Properly speaking it becomes a pilgrimage - an actual journey and a true sea change into self-knowledge and self-presence, out of an irresponsible careerism into a deep responsibility for himself and others.

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