

# Balancing the Dark

## An Equinox Moment

ARLENE GAY LEVINE

*Harvest twilight  
balancing the dark gently  
on scarecrow's shoulders*

—Arlene Gay Levine, *frogpond*,  
Haiku Society of America

It seems counterintuitive to begin an article about light by talking about the dark. Rumi said, “If light is in your heart, you will find your way home.” Most assuredly you will. Of course, the burning question he ignites in his reader is, how?

As always, the beginning is a good place to start. A Chinese proverb provides enlightenment: “You can only go halfway into the darkest forest; then you are coming out the other side.”

During the course of a solar year, the seasons accompany us on our spiritual sojourn. Ever since humans walked the face of this planet, fear, followed by fascination with these cycles, stoked desire to understand the mystery of our once-around-again world. Earth’s never-ending circles are classified into summer and winter solstice (the longest and shortest days of the year) and spring and autumn equinox. Equinoxes are the only time when both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres experience nearly identical amounts of daylight and darkness.

In our own lives, we encounter cycles too. No matter how far along the path one travels toward union with the One, the inevitable disheartening days appear. It can be as simple as some insignificant dispute with a friend, or as life-altering as the loss of a dear one. When we are feeling fragile because of harrowing news about the current global mayhem, even one hurtful word can send us spiraling from fine to frightful in a moment’s notice.

Let us uncover the subtle art of transforming suffering (what we perceive as darkness) into light, which leads to the door of our true Self. This ingress guides us to the center, a place of balance known as “the palace of holiness in the midst,” said to “sustain all things.” It is the point where space and time are unified in the

here/now experience we seek in meditation. Imagine how beneficial it might be to prolong our stay in that peaceful state after rising from meditation, as we walk through our lives minute to minute. Wouldn’t it be a blessing and a service to become more in charge of our mental and emotional states in order to uplift ourselves and everyone we meet?

The way you live your life is how you pray. Every day, hour, and moment, you possess a chance to choose the sacred path toward the revitalizing pastures of light within or to remain stuck in the pain and struggle of situations that are merely lessons waiting to be learned. There is the “I” who knows and the “I” who refuses to see. The latter causes us to cling to destructive behaviors, habits, emotions, memories, longings, and fantasies. And what really is this repudiation but a lack of acceptance caused by fear of change?

These dark contents, buried in the deep recesses of our unconscious, point toward Jung’s shadow self, or as poet Robert Bly describes it, “a long bag we drag behind us . . . We spend our life until we’re twenty deciding what parts of ourselves to put in the bag, and we spend the rest of our lives trying to get them out again.” Unless, of course, you make no effort to liberate those qualities because you are paralyzed by trepidation at an exceedingly low level of vibration. Like a malfunctioning pendulum, heavy with anxiety, hate, depression, or rage, you will be unable to move toward the center.

This extreme form of self-sabotage is really the root cause of conflict in the world. Therefore, it is imperative that we possess steadfastness so we may become light workers. Let us learn to use one of many special tools carried in our personal blue-violet velvet bag of healing. Courage is always the first implement to be unpacked. Without it, we won’t develop the self-discipline to counterbalance the aspects of personality that keep us from attaining our goal. Here is a simple exercise, which, if done regularly, will provide much insight into how to proceed.

After quieting your mind with deep breathing, plan to spend some time with a sheet of paper. Draw a line



directly down the middle. Make two lists. On the left side of the line, place the title “Qualities I dislike in others” and on the right side, use the heading “Qualities I admire in others.” Don’t rush; allow yourself to choose only those character traits that resonate from deep within. Now peruse your list of dislikes and put a check next to the ones that, with fearless eyes, you can admit you also possess. Then scan the list of positive traits and place a star next to those you wish to own. Ponder both lists. Pick one dislike that needs to change. Try to match it with the positive behavior that most closely reflects its opposite.

When you are done, consider this: opposites are merely two poles of the identical concept, with numerous fluctuating degrees between them. An important aspect of any voltage value is its polarity. Voltage is an energy level difference between two points, and the polarity of the voltage simply indicates which point has the higher energy level. Think of the thermostat controlling the temperature of your home. Is there any way to discern where heat stops and cold begins? Heat and cold simply signify varying degrees of the identical phenomenon: temperature. Similarly, the speedometer in your car at zero goes from no speed to 120 mph. Even so, zero speed and 120 mph are still degrees of the same thing: velocity.

These two sayings are believed to have been inscribed in Apollo’s temple at Delphi: “Know thyself,” and “Nothing in excess.” The exercise you just completed can be employed for both purposes. “Know thyself” speaks to your new insights into the character traits you possess and often project on others—until you own them as yours. It shines light on who you’ve been and the problems that hold you back.

Conversely, recognition of qualities you delineated as productive helps us reconcile what can be seen as opposites but are really only different degrees of the same thing: personality attributes. So, for example, jealousy (at a low rate of vibration) is nothing but the opposite pole of admiration (a high rate of vibration). The ability to transmute a mental state by neutralizing your polarity, consciously guiding it degree by degree toward the higher energy level you wish to maintain, changes your disposition. This catapults you into your own “equinox moment” and can raise the spirits of anyone near you as well.

Keep at each pairing until you feel satisfied with your results. When you can set aside some more quality time, go back to your list of dislikes and pick the next item you wish to transform by matching it with its opposite until the list is finished. Whenever necessary, start a new list and continue working through it in a similar manner.

After all this musing, do a few simple stretches and prepare to unwind. Sit or choose a prone position for the following “Drawing down the Light” relaxation. Begin with a period of deep breathing, which you will

*It is night  
yet still light enough to discern  
tendrils of new growth emerging from  
naked arms of the ancient oak: undulating  
fingers of phytoplankton, discerningly  
searching an unfathomable sea of sky.  
Everything upside down now, all  
tossed and tussled; picture an abstract painting.  
Is it hope, horror, or honorable  
intentions, portrayed for the purpose  
of this planet’s suffering/salvation  
as the earth bears our scars,  
becoming sacred again, boundlessly  
across space  
and time?*

—Arlene Gay Levine

maintain throughout. Now imagine a ball of dazzling luminosity above your head. On the next inbreath, draw that radiance down into the top of your head, and let it relax all the muscles in your scalp. Continue at your own pace, moving this healing glow into your forehead, eyes, cheekbones, jaw, and lips while allowing your muscles to relax in each location. Then resume this process, moving down the body into your neck, shoulders, arms, chest, back, and so on until you have reached the soles of your feet.

Become aware of the peaceful state of your body and mind. Enjoy the feeling for a few moments without permitting yourself to drift off. When you are ready, take a very full breath and pull that orb of illumination down through the top of your head directly into your heart. Feel its glow expand out from this sacred center of your body to fully engage with the brilliance bathing you from above. You have just merged with the Limitless Light, the One Mind, in which we all live and which also resides eternally in every heart. This is the Light that is Love which, as Rumi understood, will lead us home. ■



**Arlene Gay Levine** is the author of *39 Ways to Open Your Heart: An Illuminated Meditation* (Conari Press) and *Movie Life* (Finishing Line Press). Her prose and poetry have found a home in *The New York Times*, numerous anthologies, including most recently *The Power of the Pause* (Wising Up Press), and a new collection from Highland Park Poetry, and appear online at A Year of Being Here, Your Daily Poem, Verse-Virtual, and Storyteller Poetry Review. She is the creator of Logos Therapy™, a transformational writing process from which the exercise in this article originated.