



The complementary halves of this symbol are the black yin and the white yang, representing all opposites: dark/light, female/male, soft/hard, low/high, contemplation/action, sustaining/dominating, sensitivity/intellect — each turning into its opposite complement in harmonic equilibrium. Every person is likely to favor one or the other of those complements, generally or at least at particular junctures in life. Travers states that she gravitates to the dark complement, even when it is embodied in the villain, rather than the light complement embodied in the hero: “It is the lineaments of the villains — dwarf, giant and stepmother, wicked fairy, dragon, witch — that leap to me now across the years. Each one is different, each is its own — pitted, grained and cicatriced [i.e. scarred], battered by passion and power.” That statement may remind us of other similar ones in the great literature of the world. The novel *Anna Karenina* opens with the memorable line “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” And a witticism about the two main characters in the novel *Vanity Fair* (the cynical anti-heroine Becky Sharp and her opposite, the good-natured but naive Amelia Sedley) is “Moralists may preach and carp in platitudes most deadly; the world remembers Becky Sharp and not Amelia Sedley.”

It may say something about us that we find wickedness more interesting than goodness, and imperfection than perfection, but it is a very human reaction. A well-known observation is that “evil” is “live” spelled backward. Evil and good are ultimately our responses to various stages in the evolution of the cosmos and to the stages of our existence. That complex interaction is the theme of all the Mary Poppins books.