

A More Attractive Law of Attraction

This is the first of a two-part article, taken directly from the ebook “A More Attractive Law of Attraction”, which is part of “[The Deepening](#)” series of ebooks by [Marcus T Anthony](#), PhD.

✘ The new age and alternative spirituality movements are dominated by the idea of the law of attraction. I think that I can write that without much fear of being wrong, but perhaps not without fear of having crystals and empty bottles of incense thrown in my general direction.

In case you have been in a self-induced trance for the past three decades, the law of attraction is the idea – made ever more popular in recent years by Rhonda Byrne and The Secret video and books – that through the power of intention we can create our dreams. To generalise, it is assumed that the law of attraction permits you to “manifest” in your life whatever you desire, through focused concentration, or simply believing it enough. Although the mechanism is never clearly explained, the idea is that “God” or “the universe” will give you whatever you want, just as long as you get your head together. I call this “the naïve law of attraction”, because my experience leads me to conclude that it is far from the truth. More to the point, if I call it “BS” I will never get invited to write here again and I’ll have to use a canary to snort my mail for traces of anthrax from this moment ever after.

So let me be direct but polite from the start, as that is the way I prefer to operate. My understanding is that the naïve law of attraction – as described in most popular literature and new age media – is mostly ego projection and contains strong elements of falsehood.

Having gotten this out of the way without having been struck

down by the hand of God, I would like to now state that the purpose of this article is not to attack or belittle those who choose to follow such a belief structure. The universe grants us free will to decide what we want to believe and the way we want to live, and nobody has the right to stick their noses in our faces and tell us what to think. In fact my main task in this article is to describe an alternative to the law of attraction – and dare I say I consider it to be a more attractive variation on the theme, pun fully intended.

Here in Part 1 of this article I will state what I see as the main problems associated with the naïve law of attraction. Then in Part 2, I am then going to describe I consider to be a more workable philosophy which I call Gentle Aligned Action (assuming that I have not been run over by the local tofu truck by that time). This is an action-oriented philosophy which acknowledges some truths within the naïve idea of the law of attraction, but diverges in several important respects. Finally, I am going to state why I feel this is a far preferable way of living a spiritual and fulfilling life than those provided in such philosophies as outlined in *The Secret*.

Ego falls

Last time I looked, the world's great movers and shakers were not sitting around visualising world peace, or even their own material success. Most of the people buying new age books are middle and lower class folk feeling a little dissatisfied with their lot.

Yet perhaps the most problematic issue with the naïve law of attraction is that so many people who profess to believe it come unstuck. Many – I would say the vast majority – are not able to manifest the life of abundant material happiness they seek.

A fairly recent example of such an ego fall involved James Arthur Ray, one of the key presenters in *The Secret* video.

The relevant incident occurred near Sedona, Arizona, where Ray's spiritual retreat, featuring a native American sweat lodge, went horribly wrong. Three of the 50 or so people in the sweat lodge died. All participants paid about US\$10,000 for the weekend.

There were allegations of negligence, especially in the setting up of the sweat lodge. Extreme heat and lack of oxygen may have been what caused the deaths of the participants. Ironically, Ray allegedly wrote on his blog, "One has to die before one is spiritually reborn", the night before the tragedy. Oops.

Ray was eventually charged with manslaughter, and was found guilty of negligent homicide in June 2011.

One of the most successful law of attraction teachers is Dr Wayne Dyer. Dyer may well be the most successful "new age" writer/philosopher in history. Certainly he is right up there with Deepak Chopra, Louise Hay, Rhonda Byrne and a few others. For years Dyer has been teaching that one can manifest one's intentions.

However in recent years Wayne Dyer has suffered several rather large ego falls, and I am not talking about hair loss. Ego falls are a common human experience. They occur when the ego builds a delusion about who or what it is, and then life offers a "correction". People who write and teach about spirituality are very prone to such falls, and I include myself in that category.

Wayne Dyer's falls have been real tests for him. First, his wife, and the mother of his seven children, announced that she was leaving him for another man. Dyer admitted that he had been unfaithful to her. Then he suffered a heart attack, and ended up strapped into a hospital bed, his fate controlled by the impersonal mechanisms of hospital technology. This must have been difficult to endure for a man who had run four miles every day of his life for several decades. Then recently, as if The Creator couldn't slap him any harder, he was diagnosed with leukemia. According to Dyer, this is not a life-threatening form of the disease,

yet it surely must be a test of his courage and belief structures.

Ego falls are not necessarily the end of the world. If the individual permits the consciousness contained in the fall to be fully received, the lesson is learned. The fall may actually presage a period of growth, or a deepening into Spirit. To the outside world, though, it may look like you have failed, been a hypocrite, or just made an idiot out of yourself. Indeed, if the ego does not 'get' the lesson, then these judgments may be valid. An honest admission is required. "I did not have sexual relations with that woman" doesn't cut it, just in case any ex-presidents are reading this.

I have read one or two interviews that Wayne Dyer has given recently, and I must say that my sense of respect for him has deepened. He appears to have accepted the "corrections" that life has shown him. His courageous, honest and direct response to his setbacks shows him to be a man who walks the talk. He has openly discussed the way the ego creates illusions, and the way that the falls it experiences can assist us on our spiritual journeys.

The key point I wish to make is that Wayne Dyer has shifted his understanding of the law of attraction. He now says that we do not attract what we want, but what we are. This should be a wakeup call to many. My interpretation of this is that "what we are" refers to the totality of our consciousness – not just the ego and what it desires. For the human mind is deep. This brings us to the small issue of "the shadow".

The darkness within – and beyond

Many years ago I underwent intensive spiritual training with some genuine kick-ass spiritual teachers. Perhaps the most powerful thing they ever taught me was to be vigilant about my intentions, and this caused me to delve deeply into my shadow – the dark and murky depths of my own mind. As a result I became increasingly transparent unto myself and quickly learned to befriend my inner trickster. My teachers

helped me out a bit by rubbing it in my face, but that is another story.

I also learned to read the shadows within other people's minds, regardless of who they are or where they are. And this leads me to another major reservation I have about the naïve law of attraction – my intuitive readings of the intentions of some teachers in the field. When I come across books and videos about the law of attraction (or any other subject matter) I look within the person, or into the energy behind the project, to see where they are coming from. Much of the time the energy is in alignment with darker intentions: drives for attention, money, power and control. This is the same shadowy territory where ex-presidents get overly creative with their boxes of cigars.

Make no mistake. The ego is a trickster and tries to hide itself from the conscious mind. Much of the problem I am talking about is by definition unconscious. The practitioners simply don't know what they are doing. For this reason I have not been overly surprised when I have read of several ego falls by law of attraction advocates in recent times.

My experience with the law of attraction

Let me now explain how my personal experience has led to my questioning the naïve version of the law of attraction. I have experimented with the idea for many years and discovered that the universe doesn't just bend its ways to accommodate personal will. In this regard I am in agreement with Wayne Dyer.

Nonetheless, the truth as far as I have been able to gather is that the universe does tend to reflect back to you your beliefs about reality. Now this is quite a different thing from saying that you can control reality directly, or make something happen just by thinking about it.

Rather than attempt to explain the fine details of my understanding, let me relate a cautionary tale which I feel

will share the required knowledge. I recall the exact moment when I came to finally accept that we attract not what we want, but what we are.

As is often the case, it all came after an ego fall. In 2009 had an interview for a postdoctoral position at a prestigious university in Asia. I had followed through and applied for the job, even though I had a very strong feeling that it wasn't right for me. But after getting a phone interview, I became increasingly attached to the idea of working as a big-name university professor at a snobby university. After all, it was not an unreasonable expectation. And after the preliminary phone interviews there were only two people granted face-to-face interviews, and I was extremely well-qualified. I had done everything I could possibly do for a recently-graduated PhD. Indeed I had excelled myself in terms of publication and writing, having already published some thirty papers in the two and a half years since I had been awarded the degree, an almost unheard of amount of work.

I spent a month preparing a 45 minute presentation on Deep Futures, arguing that it was time to move beyond materialistic "money and machines" models of economic development. Instead we should embrace futures which honour a deeper experience of life, including the spiritual (you can see the academic paper I wrote as part of that job application [here](#)).

What's more I decided to use the law of attraction to get an edge on my opponent. I visualised myself clearly performing well in the interview, and then being granted the position. Just as they advise in *The Secret*, I felt myself sitting in front of a huge oak table in a throne-sized chair in that swanky office and in that exotic location, having secured the job. I added a box of cigars on the desk, just in case the secretary was hot.

I flew into the said country feeling apprehensive. Something just didn't feel right about the whole situation. The morning of the interview I woke up in my hotel room, and as

usual, I received a message from Spirit in the form of lyrics from a song which popped into my head. The words were crisp, clear. The words came from an old Eagles song: "I don't know when I realised the dream was over".

The meaning was obvious, and it wasn't merely that I was still stuck in the 1970s. No. This wasn't meant to be. My initial reading of the energy had been right.

Still, I resisted (which Spirit always allows). I decided to give the interview my best shot.

A few hours later I gave my presentation to the interviewing committee. After I had finished, several committee members were openly disdainful, even hostile towards me. I did my best to answer their tough questions, yet as a recently graduated PhD, and with relatively little experience in university settings, I probably didn't satisfy some of them. I didn't get the job.

For about a week I felt great despair. I had failed yet again to attain what I had wanted. I reverted to a victim mentality, (which is what I refer to as a "soul issue" for me). I did an awful lot of soul searching. Then, the following Sunday, sitting by myself and feeling depressed and hopeless as I went through the interview in my mind for the hundredth time, I saw something clearly.

I had created my own suffering by aligning myself not with the energy of Spirit, but with the intentions of my ego.

But I got it. I took the shot and fell. It was humbling, but freeing at the same time. And I was immediately liberated from my own delusion.

I did not return to the victim state, or the depression. The lesson had been learned. Before we invest emotional energy and the energy of intention into a dream, we should first check to see if the energy is meant to be. For the universe is not a smorgasbord catering to our orders for better service.

The universe is generous, but we must respect her wishes. But more about that in part 2.