

The Gestalt of Twilight

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“You are what your deepest desire is. As you desire, so is your intention. As your intention, so is your will. As is your will, so is your deed. As is your deed, so is your destiny.”

—The Upanishads

“I want you to be safe. And yet, I want to be with you. The two desires are impossible to reconcile.”

—Edward Cullen, *Twilight*

We human beings love categories. We especially love dichotomous choices. They not only help us make sense of our reality and decide how to interact with it, but are the source of seemingly every heated debate in seemingly every demographic group:

Yankees or Red Sox? Betty or Veronica? Democrat or Republican?

The prominent salience of dichotomies is part of the Twilight Saga’s appeal. Dichotomies are everywhere: good versus evil, human versus monster, vampires versus werewolves, even love versus hate, as at the very beginning when Bella doesn’t understand Edward’s unusual behavior. Practically every choice is set up as a dichotomy: Bella decides to live with her dad instead of her mom, constantly goes back and forth between Edward and Jacob Black, and eventually has to choose (or at least believes she does) between a father-daughter relationship with Charlie and a marital relationship with Edward.

Yet, the interesting thing is not the presence of the dichotomies but that, when it comes down to it, they are almost always “false” choices. Real-life choices are rarely truly dichotomous. Multiple options are almost always possible, and seemingly mutually

exclusive feelings and behaviors commonly coexist. Who among us has not had the experience of being furious at someone we love or unintentionally hurting another in an attempt to be helpful? It is this kind of complexity that Gestalt theory—the proposition that the nature of some unified whole cannot be understood by analyzing its parts¹—was designed to address. Applied to human beings, Gestalt therapy, originally developed by Fritz and Laura Perls, suggests that understanding this complexity and seeing the world in multiple shades of gray, rather than as black and white (i.e., false dichotomies) is characteristic of healthy functioning. Stephenie Meyer gets this. One after another, the dichotomies above are revealed to be much more complex than they initially appear. Thus, we learn that vampires are not necessarily evil, that monsters can be loving, caring, and humane (while humans can be monstrous), and that what seems to be either hate or lack of caring (disappearing without any explanation) can actually be an expression of love. Like Perls, Meyer seems to be suggesting that all of us, not just Bella, would be better served if we would learn to see the world in its full complexity rather than as dichotomous choices.²

The Gestalt

Gestalt is a German word. It has no literal English translation but is used to refer to a perceptual whole, a unified form or experience (e.g., love) that cannot be separated into parts without losing its essence. Gestalt theory is closely related to field theory, which is the idea that organisms (e.g., humans, vampires, etc.) can only be perceived in the context

¹ Some creative mind has turned this concept into a clever poster: “What part of gestalt don’t you understand?”

² It is noteworthy that the first song in the soundtrack to *Eclipse* (“All Yours”) is essentially about choices, with the singer [Bella] asking, “Will they hate me for all the choices I’ve made?”

of their environment. One of the assumptions of field theory is that only the *current* field—the person’s immediate (rather than past) environment—can influence behavior and experience.

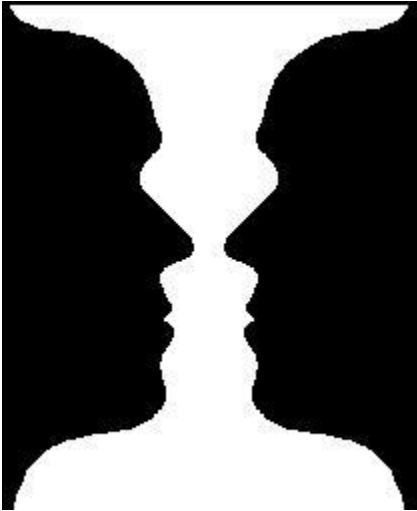
On the surface, this seems preposterous. Is not the Cullens’ entire (vegetarian) lifestyle due mostly to Carlisle’s insistence as a newborn to retain his humanity and not feed on humans, despite the unbearable thirst? Did not that memory of resisting the temptation and the happenstance of discovering that an animal could, at least partly, quench his thirst inspire not just Carlisle but his entire family?

Meyer leaves no doubt about the past’s lasting impact, but for field theorists, it is not the past experience itself but the memory of the experience and the subsequent interpretation of that memory that comprises the current field.³ In the case of Carlisle, what is important is not his initial refusal to feed on humans (as a newborn vampire) but his continued choice to allow that early memory to inspire him to remain “vegetarian.”⁴

According to Gestalt theory, our life experiences form as a Gestalt, in which some aspects of that experience comprise a figure (that which we decide is of primary importance), and the rest of the aspects comprise the ground (i.e., the background). As in the picture below, figure and ground are polar opposites of each other. That is, to see the two black faces, we must relegate the white space to the background, and the white vase is only evident when it is the black spaces around it that are backgrounded. We can see one . . . or the other, but never both simultaneously.

³ As an aside, since other factors in the person’s current field (e.g., temporary mood state, other memories) also exert an influence, a person’s autobiographical story cannot tell others anything about what actually happened in that person’s past—only how that person is experiencing the past in the here and now.

⁴ The memory and the “vegetarian” lifestyle do not need to be linked. Consider, as an example, a different vampire, who, weak from consuming inferior blood, is captured by humans who keep him in captivity by allowing him to drink just enough blood to barely survive. Under such circumstances, the initial memory of resisting feeding on humans may become part of the narrative of betrayal and the justification for vengeful killing.



When a person is psychologically healthy and functioning well, figures and grounds are dynamic, shifting based on changing needs and situations.⁵ Thus, in the course of the series, Bella sometimes feels tremendous affection for Jacob (foregrounding his playfulness and loyalty) and sometimes an intense hatred, as when she first learns that he imprinted on Nessie.

Gestalt theory posits that life is dominated by polarities, including life/death, strength/vulnerability, and connection/separation and that the constant shifting and recalibrating of these polarities is “the rich tapestry of existence” (Yontef & Jacobs). When a person experiences psychological distress or exhibits psychopathology, it is because some aspect of his or her awareness has been disrupted. More specifically, some aspect of his or her ground (experience) is being kept out of awareness. When this happens, the person is unable to acknowledge some aspect of the self, which in turn leads to the perception of insoluble conflicts (often manifesting as dichotomous choices) and the experience of inner turmoil. This is evident, for example, in *New Moon*, when Edward decides to end the relationship with Bella and leave Forks because he does not want to

⁵ Yontef, Gary, and Lynne Jacobs. “Gestalt Therapy.” In R. J. Corsini & D. Wedding (eds.) *Current Psychotherapies*, 7th Edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson, 2005.

acknowledge and live with the possibility that Bella might get hurt as a result of being with him. That is, he chooses to leave because leaving seems to him to be the only other option besides exposing Bella to further danger—a false dichotomy.

The Gestalt “intervention” then is to help the person become more fully aware—of himself/herself, of others, and of the environment or field. The goal is to help the person recognize that even if one side of the polarity seems right in the moment, it does not mean that the other side may not be equally valid at another time. In the case of Edward leaving Bella, had he been more aware of how painful his leaving would be for Bella, he might have seen the falseness of the dichotomy he had set up and considered various other options for keeping her safe.

To illustrate their role in the saga and how we might increase our awareness of them (rather than seeing them as dichotomous choices), I will examine two specific polarities that are highly salient in *Twilight*: life versus death and human versus monster.

Life versus Death

One particular aspect of the environmental field that many of us struggle to keep in our awareness is the prospect of our own mortality. Let’s face it: most of us living in Western countries would rather think about other things than our own certain demise. Yet, death is such a crucial part of life that existential philosophers and psychologists have sometimes described it as a gift.⁶ In the words of novelist Paul Theroux, “Death is an endless night so awful to contemplate that it can make us love life and value it with such passion that it may be the ultimate cause of all joy and all art.”

⁶ This notion is well examined in an alternate vampire universe, with Buffy, the vampire slayer, receiving some unexpected existential therapy from the spirit of the First Slayer, who following the death of Buffy’s mother cryptically tells Buffy, “Death is your gift” (“Intervention,” 5-18).

In other words, death is a gift because our awareness of our own mortality gives our life urgency and forces us to find in it meaning. The specific meaning has to be determined individually, but May and Yalom argue that confrontation with death persuades individuals to count their blessings, become more aware of how their relationships impact their life, and engage more fully with their life's purpose.

For Bella, one crucial encounter with death occurs when she decides to sacrifice her own life in order to protect her mother, who Bella thinks is being held captive by James. After surviving this encounter thanks to a timely rescue, Bella decides she loves Edward so much that she wants to sacrifice her mortal life in order to be able to spend eternity with him. Moreover, because Edward was changed at seventeen, she wants the end (and the new beginning) to be immediate

To Bella, the afterlife she yearns for is well worth the cost of her human life, and she doesn't seem to struggle much with the choice. She is, to be sure, saddened by the realization that it likely means never seeing her parents again, but there seem to be no other human relationships worth grieving⁷ or human experiences worth having.⁸ For Bella, becoming a vampire (in order to be with Edward) quickly begins to be the primary, if not the only, purpose of her human life.⁹

⁷ The absence of close friendships and other close relationships is taken up in depth later in the essay.

⁸ Both Edward and Alice are taken aback by this attitude. Alice even scolds her, "You don't get to be human again, Bella. This is a once-in-a-lifetime shot" (*Eclipse*).

⁹ This has been a point of contention for some feminist critics who want works of fiction to reflect the full richness of women's interests and abilities to contribute to society, rather than reinforcing traditional gendered representations of young women finding personal fulfillment *exclusively* in a romantic relationship. For her part, Meyer denies that *Twilight* is an anti-feminist work, pointing out that, in her view, feminism is primarily about validating and respecting the full range of women's choices, including so-called traditional ones. She further points out that Bella is a fictional character in a non-realistic universe and that she never meant for Bella's choices to either reflect her own choice preferences or be the model for anyone else's (stepheniemeyer.com). My own view is that here, too, the dichotomous framing of the debate (feminist versus antifeminist) is unrealistic and counterproductive. Bella's choices are worth discussing—in a variety of contexts—including feminism and healthy relationships. In the context of the former, it seems much more meaningful and accurate to describe both the ways in which Bella's choices contribute to a

In *New Moon*, this purpose is taken away from her. When Edward disappears, it is clear that Bella loses not just the object of her love but her very reason for living. It's not that she wants to die. It's just that she no longer has any purpose for being alive. As she notes in *New Moon*:

I wasn't suicidal. Even in the beginning, when death unquestionably would have been a relief, I didn't consider it. I owed too much to Charlie. I felt too responsible for Renee. I had to think of them. And I'd made a promise not to do anything stupid or reckless. For all those reasons, I was still breathing.

In this passage, we see the inherent contradictions of dichotomous choices. Death is appealing (an unquestionable relief), but she doesn't want to die. Life feels unbearable and meaningless, yet she still feels enough connection to others to want to keep living. Moreover, though she doesn't say so directly, Bella's behavior suggests that she both wants to feel better and, on some level, enjoys the pain because it reminds her of Edward and reinforces her feelings of love and loyalty. From a Gestalt perspective, it is desirable for Bella to have an awareness of both of these needs. Indeed, they would argue that she can only begin to feel better and move on after she realizes and acknowledges both her wish to feel better and her need to remain inconsolable. As Abraham Maslow wrote, "If we wish to help humans to become more fully human, we must realize not only that they try to realize¹⁰ themselves, but that they are also reluctant or afraid or unable to do so. Only by fully appreciating this

feminist ideal and the ways in which they depart from that ideal. It is also reasonable to eschew such a discussion altogether in order to focus on something else. Feminist ideals aside, Bella's feelings of intense and passionate love and her choice to pursue this love at the cost of everything else are familiar to many of us. Bella provides a window into our own experience (or fantasy) of passionate love. For some of us, the experience is far removed but still accessible with the right catalyst. Bella is that catalyst and we embrace her, not only for who she is but for our own memories of passionate love that she awakens. This is entirely independent of feminism, which of course has its place in this discussion. From my perspective, the feminist critique is neither right nor wrong. It is simply, as dichotomous choices always are, incomplete.

¹⁰ This second "realize" refers to the humanistic notion that humans are constantly striving to improve themselves by "realizing" their full potential.

dialectic between sickness and health can we help to tip the balance in favor of health.”

Bella’s despair is eventually eased by Jacob, whose exuberance for life sparks something in Bella’s soul. She connects with Jacob, differently than she does with Edward, but still with a depth she doesn’t experience elsewhere. Given more time, one gets the sense that her relationship with Jacob could have been transformative, but that opportunity is lost when she hears from Edward and takes off to find him. Her most transformative relationship, the road to what Maslow called “full humanity,” would happen later. In *New Moon*, it is enough that Jacob gives her a reason to *want to keep* living, rather than merely going through the motions.

Bella’s final confrontation with death is also the one that is most psychologically complex. Unlike James, an enemy she could try to evade or fight (albeit unsuccessfully), or her decision to end her mortal life in order to live as a vampire, in *Breaking Dawn* the possibility of death comes in the form of someone she loves. Meyer provides a foreshadowing of this confrontation in the preface to the final book.

When you loved the one who was killing you, it left you no options. How could you run, how could you fight, when doing so would hurt that beloved one? If your life was all that you had to give your beloved, how could you not give it?

The passage is deliberately misleading. It leads us to anticipate some life and death conflict with Edward, rather than the life-threatening risks involved in bringing Renesmee into the world. Yet, the words clearly capture the dilemma inherent in the latter. As she did twice previously, Bella again decides to put her life on the line for love. But whereas earlier her sole life’s purpose was to be with Edward, in *Breaking Dawn* she is able and willing to put her (undiminished) love for Edward in the background in order

to give priority to the growing life inside her. In sacrificing herself to James, Bella acts selflessly, but her choice then was driven by impulse, rather than consideration and, ultimately, proved foolish. In contrast, the choice to carry and give birth to Renesmee, despite what often seem to be insurmountable odds, is reality-based and carefully considered.

In *Breaking Dawn*, for the first time,¹¹ Bella's purpose in life extends beyond Edward.¹² It is a true coming of age moment for Bella, a transformation that proves just as meaningful as the one she was striving for all along. It is also a transformation that could not have occurred without the very strong possibility of dying. It is the risk of dying that gives Bella's actions such meaning. Without this risk, Bella might not have felt such a strong urgency to go through with the pregnancy. In the Twilight saga, as in real life, even life and death are intertwined.

Good and evil, human and monster are intertwined, too, and it is to this polarity that I now turn.

Human versus Monster

Buffy took the horror out of vampires with her campy humor. Anita Blake dated them and used them (and other "monsters") for her sexual pleasure. But, though others may have done it previously, it is Bella who finally obliterated the heretofore hard line between human and vampire in our national consciousness.^{13, 14} For one, both the

¹¹ Even at the very end of *Eclipse*, Bella says without any regret, "Everything in my world was about him."

¹² On the other hand, the child is Edward's, so even her interest in the baby is not completely independent of her love for him.

¹³ To be fair, the Anita Blake novels also deliberately blur the line between human and monster, but they do so by having Anita gradually become more monster-like. In the Twilight novels, the so-called monsters are, over time, revealed to be more and more humane.

vampires and the shape-shifters in Meyer's world can and do pass for human. Yet, it is not the physical resemblance that blurs the distinction. After all, the vampires have skin as hard as stone, don't have a heartbeat, and have need of neither sleep nor air. What makes the distinction rather fuzzy is that some of Meyer's vampires are more humane than some of the humans.

There are, of course, vampires who choose to be "bad" (James, for example), but Meyer explicitly shows that both humans and non-humans are capable of evil, as well as of good. Consistent with Gestalt theory, behavior in the Twilight universe is determined by the experiential memories and other factors acting on the current field. James appears to be a sadist, enjoying not only the chase (he's a tracker) but also the pain of his target victim, but most other "bad" vampires have very human motivations, including grief, despair, and desperation. It is noteworthy, for example, that the three leaders of the feared Volturi—Aro, Caius, and Marcus—all have different personalities and needs. And though Caius is depicted as impulsive, cruel, and philosophically in favor of retribution, these traits seem more human than inhumanly evil. We may not like Caius, but knowing that he was almost killed by werewolves (the "real" kind, not shape-shifters like Jacob), we can understand his anger/hate/fear of the Cullens-Quileute alliance and empathize with him, much more so than with the would-be human rapists who stalked Bella in *Twilight*.

Ironically, it is many of the human characters that are flat and under-developed. Renee, for example, is flighty with a tendency to over-react, and Charlie never escapes

¹⁴ At the time of this writing, at least two other vampire universes have made the hazy monster-human boundary a central focus: the 2007–2008 CBS series *Moonlight* and the still-running *Being Human* on BBC. In both shows, the vampires, who don't have the luxury of taking their humanity for granted, must make conscious choices about what it means to be human.

the stereotype of the dad who doesn't like or trust his daughter's boyfriend. If anything, Bella's human friends are even more one-dimensional, and there is no glimpse into their inner lives. In contrast, the vampires have multiple complex personalities and rich personal histories through which we can better understand their motivations. Moreover, unlike Bella's human friends and family members, the Cullens are dynamic, psychologically changing and growing before our eyes, even as we are told that vampires are incapable of any physical change.

It is Edward, of course, who changes the most, and Edward who first challenges our traditional notions of good and evil. When we (Bella and the reader) first meet Edward, his motivations and character are ambiguous.

"That's Edward," Jessica tells Bella. "He's gorgeous, of course, but don't waste your time. He doesn't date. Apparently none of the girls here are good-looking enough for him."

Gorgeous is good, but conceit and narcissism are most certainly not. Which is Edward's true character? For a while, it continues to be unclear, as Edward first ignores Bella and then disappears entirely. But after he returns and displays a friendlier demeanor, Bella decides he's one of the good guys. "What if I'm not a superhero?" Edward challenges, "What if I'm the bad guy?" "You're dangerous," Bella replies, "but not bad . . . no, I can't believe you're bad."

Bella's instincts turn out accurate. Edward is the opposite of bad. He is sensitive, generous, and, perhaps most impressively, has eyes only for Bella. His brooding aside (he does have reason after all), Edward is not just good, he is Prince-Charmingly perfect.¹⁵

¹⁵ Some readers may believe that Edward does have blemishes, and, to be sure, he is sometimes overprotective, controlling, and even unreasonably angry. Yet, Bella makes him realize and eventually change all of these bad traits (e.g., in *New Moon*, Edward takes out his fear and anger on Alice but changes his behavior when he realizes that Bella disapproves). Thus, rather than showing Edward's imperfection,

This may work as a romantic fantasy,¹⁶ but it is rather unsatisfying as social commentary.¹⁷ Real-life heroes have blemishes, both on their skin and in their personality. And yet, the Twilight Saga does say some important things about our society in the way that it treats its “monsters.” One of these messages is about relationships.

“All real living is meeting,” wrote philosopher Martin Buber, and certainly it is the case that every person’s field is filled with other beings. Indeed, Gestalt theory regards self awareness and relationships as inseparable: we decide who we are based on our experience of ourselves in relation to others. This includes our perceptions regarding how we are regarded by others, as well as by our own thoughts and behaviors toward others. It is not the case that our relationships *influence* who we are. It is much more than that. They *define* who we are. Completely. In Gestalt theory, according to Yontef and Jacobs, “there is not ‘I’, no sense of self other than self in relation to others. There is only the ‘I’ of the ‘I-Thou’ or the ‘I’ of the ‘I-it.’ ”

In the “I-it,” the “I” is in relation with an object. This relationship need not be trivial. A violinist with her instrument under her chin, a chef chopping up herbs with her favorite set of knives, a writer typing away on his laptop, are all examples of self-definition in relation to objects. It is hardly profound to observe that these objects are often much loved. Yet, the “it” refers to animate objects, too, even other sentient beings. When we treat another like an object, as a “thing” with no history, no future, and no identity, as a “thing” that has no impact on our own identity, then this, too, is an “I-it”

these behaviors are used to showcase the contrary—that Edward could and would change anything to please his beloved.

¹⁶ Given that at the time of this writing *Twilight* has sold seventeen million copies worldwide, spent over ninety-one weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list and been translated into thirty-seven different languages (Wikipedia), it clearly works rather well.

¹⁷ For those who may object to the idea of the Twilight novels being a social commentary, I take the position that all vampire fiction is allegorical, a view supported by most vampire scholars. Additionally, I would point out that Meyer certainly intended for the books to be a social commentary on sexual mores.

relationship. In this case, the person-object may be loved, but he/she is loved for what he/she does for us, rather than as a full person.

In the “I-Thou,” we see ourselves through the eyes of the other . . . and care about that reflection. We care, too, about the other’s well-being, not just for our own needs but because we truly value his/her happiness, success, and life experiences. In the I-Thou, the relationship is characterized by contact, a psychological intimacy in which we allow the person to see us as we really are, warts and all. This can be a vulnerable state to be in, and it takes too much energy to engage in this way with all the people we meet. It is not even possible to sustain contact at all times with a selective few. But we need to experience the I-Thou relationship with at least one other person to have a fully-developed sense of identity, to have a real sense of who we really are.

Edward’s relationship with Bella is undoubtedly I-Thou. She is his first love, and his expression of that love is both intimate and vulnerable. Moreover, because he cannot read her mind the way he can everyone else’s, he has to resort to more traditional forms of communication. Ironically, for Edward, listening to spoken words and watching for physical nonverbals is more intimate than mind-reading. The latter seems to happen instantaneously for Edward, and, in that instant, Edward seems to have the ability to see the essence of what he is looking for. Listening to Bella is slower and less efficient. A question about one thing may lead to a response that has lots of information about something else. As with any other person, it takes time, patience, and energy to figure out what Bella wants and why it is important to her. Though slower and inefficient, verbal speech allows the discovery of new things about another person and the words (and nonverbal gestures) serve as a bridge from one person to another. Even the inevitable

misunderstandings that arise from talking are opportunities for a deeper connection, as they require those involved to focus on each other and work through the conflict by understanding each other's feelings and needs.

In addition, unlike mind-reading, verbal communication allows for deliberate deception. When listening to Bella, Edward must trust that what she is telling him is true in her own mind. He must trust her and also communicate to her that he, in turn, is trustworthy—that he will continue to love her even if she tells him things he doesn't want to hear, like wanting to spend time with Jacob. Both the trusting and the need to earn trust are forms of vulnerability for Edward. The vulnerability leads to greater intimacy. After all, we purposefully make ourselves vulnerable only to those we trust the most, only to those with whom we have (or want to have) the most intimacy.

This willingness to make himself vulnerable is one of the many ways that Edward signals that he is not a monster. Monsters do not make themselves intentionally vulnerable. Monsters do not form I-Thou relationships.¹⁸ When they do, they stop being a monster¹⁹ and become something more.

It is this quest for something more that ultimately separates Edward and his family from the real monsters. It is not that the Cullens love/accept Bella (history is replete with such exceptions), but that they have made an intentional and firm commitment to not drink human blood. This is no small feat. Vampires crave human blood by nature.²⁰ It is their primary biological drive, a drive that is also reinforced by

¹⁸ The prototypical monster is in an I-It relationship with others, including allies. That is, other sentient beings are typically just objects used to further the monster's agenda. Similarly, sentient beings tend to only see monsters as "It"—as an enemy to either escape or overcome.

¹⁹ Thus, when the Beast tells Belle to go to her father because he realizes that's what she wants to do, even at the perceived cost of his own well-being, he turns back into a prince (*Beauty and the Beast*).

²⁰ One could say "it's in their blood," except of course they don't have any blood of their own.

many years—sometimes centuries—of experience.²¹ To lead a “vegetarian” lifestyle, then, is to refuse to be constrained by either our genetic programming or our cultural socialization. It is the striving to be the person we want to be, rather than the person we were meant to be or who we currently are. The vegetarianism, more than anything else, is the antithesis of monsterhood. A being who strives to be something better than what he/she is may be flawed but is never a monster.

This way of thinking about humans and monsters has deeper implications. If a monster is someone who *chooses* to embrace and take pleasure in inhumane behavior, and everyone has the freedom and ability to choose how they live, then there is no such thing as pure evil, because there is always the possibility of a different choice in the future. We see this with Jasper, who spent well over one hundred years happily drinking human blood and living a lifestyle of violence before choosing to join the Cullens out of love for Alice. This is an optimistic view of human nature, and if it is not entirely consistent with the life histories of psychopaths and serial killers, it is certainly consistent with Gestalt theory, which, as described previously, posits that all behavior is determined by the current field and need not be strongly influenced by our previous life experience.

In this context, the Twilight Saga raises a vital, if sometimes uncomfortable, question: Who are the monsters in our real universe? Rapists and murderers. Of course. But if Edward is set up as the antithesis of a monster and makes the choice to reject and overcome his inherent need for human blood, then what is the implication for those of us who embrace our destructive yearnings? The Cullens (and by extension, Meyer) clearly have no problem with eating animals, but vampires aside, isn't raising animals for

²¹ The 150 years of drinking (and enjoying) human blood is why Jasper has more trouble with the vegetarian lifestyle than the other Cullens.

slaughter, butchering and selling the meat, and, yes, eating it, also violent, also inhumane, not to mention environmentally destructive? Not to remove our humanity with a single broad stroke—there are many ways to act humanely—but isn't the logical conclusion that we are all part monster or that, at the very least, we all have the capacity (as Edward does) to act monstrously, as well as humanely?

At the end of the day, *Twilight* tells us that *all* that defines who we are, *all* that defines whether we are human or monster, are our choices. More importantly, it shows us that even if the choice between two dichotomous options seems clear, the reality is more complex. *Twilight* shows us how life and death are intertwined and inseparable. It also suggests that we are all part light and part shadow, all part human and part monster. Further, it shows us that the shadow and the monster are sometimes better than the light and the human. In doing so, it helps us become more open to seeing the shadow and monster in ourselves, as well as the light and the humanity in others. This is precisely the kind of increased awareness that Gestalt therapists strive to facilitate in their clients. Along with the romantic fantasy, this expansion of our awareness is part of *Twilight*'s appeal. Appearances to the contrary, Edward is no Prince Charming.²² And that's a good thing!

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²² Because Prince Charming didn't have a dark side to overcome and doesn't in any way struggle with his humanity.