

The Shadow Teaches: Snakes, Dreams, and the Power of Animal Archetypes

That story was written 5000 years ago by patriarchal culture that had an agenda. Let’s get rid of the goddess because we’re all about the sky gods. And we got to bring that in. The snake—often in altar shrines connected with the goddess—had to go too. But if you read the story of Genesis itself, it’s interesting because God tells Adam and Eve, “You can’t eat from these trees or you’ll die.” And the snake tells Eve, “You can eat from the tree, go ahead. You’ll just wake up and you’ll become like God. You’ll know things.” Eve eats, and so does Adam. And what happens? They don’t die, do they? They awaken. So who’s lying?

It’s like movie advertisements—two ways of manipulating a narrative to push an agenda. That moment is the turning point in the mythology of snake. Before that time, the snake was the advisor to gods and goddesses, the mentor to royalty. In Egypt, in India with Shiva and Vishnu, even over the Buddha—snakes are depicted protecting during the rainstorm. Snake was the all-wise creature. Even the Bible says that.

And as sinners, I’m Adam Nox, and welcome to another episode of *The Cult of You*. Today, I explore a segment of our interview with the devil, where I speak with thinkers on occultism, spirituality, and personal alchemy. My guest today is Dawn Baumann Brunke, author of *Shadow Animals*, *Dreaming with Polar Bears*, and *Awakening the Ancient Power of Snakes*. She’s also created animal-themed tarot decks and delves deeply into animal communication. To be honest, I used to raise an eyebrow at the idea of animal spirit communication. But when I opened Dawn’s books and really researched her, I found someone deeply in touch with the archetypal significance of animal consciousness. It transformed how I saw shadow projection—not just as something mirrored in people, but as something animals, even the ones we fear, reveal to us.

Think about it—scorpions, tarantulas, snakes. I took it as a personal challenge to engage with these beings, but I didn’t realize I was facing projections of my shadow. Dawn’s work opened my eyes. Shadow animals are not just symbols—they can be initiators, showing up in dreams or waking life to reveal our unconscious material.

We talk about the scapegoat archetype, the collective symbolism of animals like the kraken or Cthulhu, and how mythology can point us toward deeper truths. This isn’t a rigid philosophy—it’s a playful but potent exploration. We dive into Odin and his animals, biblical symbols, dreamwork, and the somatic process of shadow integration.

Whether you’re a seasoned occultist or someone passionate about shadow work and personal transformation, you’ll find gold in this dialogue.

Dawn explains that shadow animals often test us—not in a judgmental way, but to see if we’re ready for the responsibility that comes with awakening. Snake, for instance, in the Eastern tradition, represents the kundalini energy. It lies dormant until we’re prepared. If we’re not grounded, its awakening can be disruptive. The same goes for shadow work. We must meet it with maturity.

She shares a childhood story of a cat that appeared repeatedly in her dreams. At the time, she didn’t understand it, but over time she realized it was testing her, preparing her to face aspects of herself. Shadow animals often show up in dreams like this—as symbols of what we’re not yet ready to own.

We discussed how shadow projections can dominate our lives when we refuse to take responsibility. That politician, that bad driver—they all become scapegoats. But the real question is: what part of that are we?

The shadow asks us to sit with discomfort. To feel it. Dawn describes a method of simply sitting with the trigger, not rationalizing, just noticing. The body holds wisdom—tight jaws, buzzing ears, the need to lash out. These are clues.

Over time, this practice brings curiosity. Why does this trigger me? What part of me is speaking? Is it an inner child? An angry teenager? A tired elder? Begin a dialogue. Track patterns. Dreams become maps. A leopard cub in a closet—ancestral messages. And that’s how we begin to own our shadow—not banish it, but welcome it. As Robert Bly said, it’s the “long bag we drag behind us.” We eat our shadow, bit by bit, and reclaim the gifts we exiled.

This work brings energy back. It’s soul retrieval. It’s awakening. And yes—immature light is as dangerous as immature darkness. We need balance. The snake is the master of integration. Its body winds, uniting opposites.

We talked about goat next—my personal symbol, the scapegoat, Black Phillip. Goat has been demonized, yet it’s one of the oldest domesticated animals. It gave milk, cheese, independence. Pan, the wild god, was beloved by villagers. The church couldn’t control it, so it projected evil onto goat. The scapegoat was a literal goat dressed in red, sent into the wilderness with the sins of the village.

It’s spiritual bypassing. And it robs us of the fierce, joyful independence that goat represents. We moved into the idea of resonance. That our projections—shadow or light—are drawn by resonance. We don’t see things as they are, but as we are. And some of our greatest teachers are the beings we fear the most.

We discussed shadow eating. The Hebrew word that came to me in meditation translated as “consuming the false self.” It mirrors Samael’s poison in the Qliphoth—the dark side of Mercury. The madness isn’t insanity—it’s liberation from sterile logic.

We slowly kill the false self by integrating the shadow. As Dawn says, we bring back energy and soul through this reintegration. It’s an act of remembrance.

The ouroboros—snake eating its tail— isn’t just a symbol. It’s a portal. It shows us how to eat and be eaten, how to integrate by surrendering. Not a flat circle—a gateway into self-reclamation.

We explored sexuality as sacred energy. When men or women externalize it excessively, it leads to neediness and projection. But when it flows inward again, through shadow integration, it becomes magnetism. We become whole.

From there we entered Lovecraftian territory—the Kraken, Cthulhu. Not just horror fiction, but archetypal metaphors for the repressed unconscious. Tentacles represent overwhelm—our shadow rising from the ocean of psyche.

Robert Moore said this is grandiosity—infantile ego terror. We must face the dragon. Or the Kraken. The animal form makes it digestible. Easier than facing it in humans. But eventually, we reach the final shadow animal—ourselves.

There’s poetry in the fact that Dawn’s book has 13 chapters—mirroring the lunar calendar, the goddess, and the sacred feminine.

As we neared the end, we reflected on Odin, his wolves Geri and Freki—symbols of chaos, destruction, courage, loyalty. His ravens, Huginn and Muninn—thought and memory.

Shapeshifting. A divine masculine in balance with his shadow.

Shadow isn’t evil. Violence isn’t evil. When matured, these become protection, courage, strength. When immature, they become tyranny or repression.

Even plants, as Dawn points out, hold shadow—power plants, poisons, medicines. The frog, the peacock, the sacred substances—each show us how to transmute chaos into color, pain into power.

She urges us to find our own center. There is no one-size-fits-all. Whether you swim with whales, meditate with cats, or dream with polar bears—find your way in.

The voice inside knows. You are the ritual. You are the medicine.

Close your eyes, listen, and live deliciously.