

A Monastery of One

Public Edition



by
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Cover photo: Sacred Space on the day of the first Perfect wa, 06 FEB 84, Nishikiwa, Ube, Japan

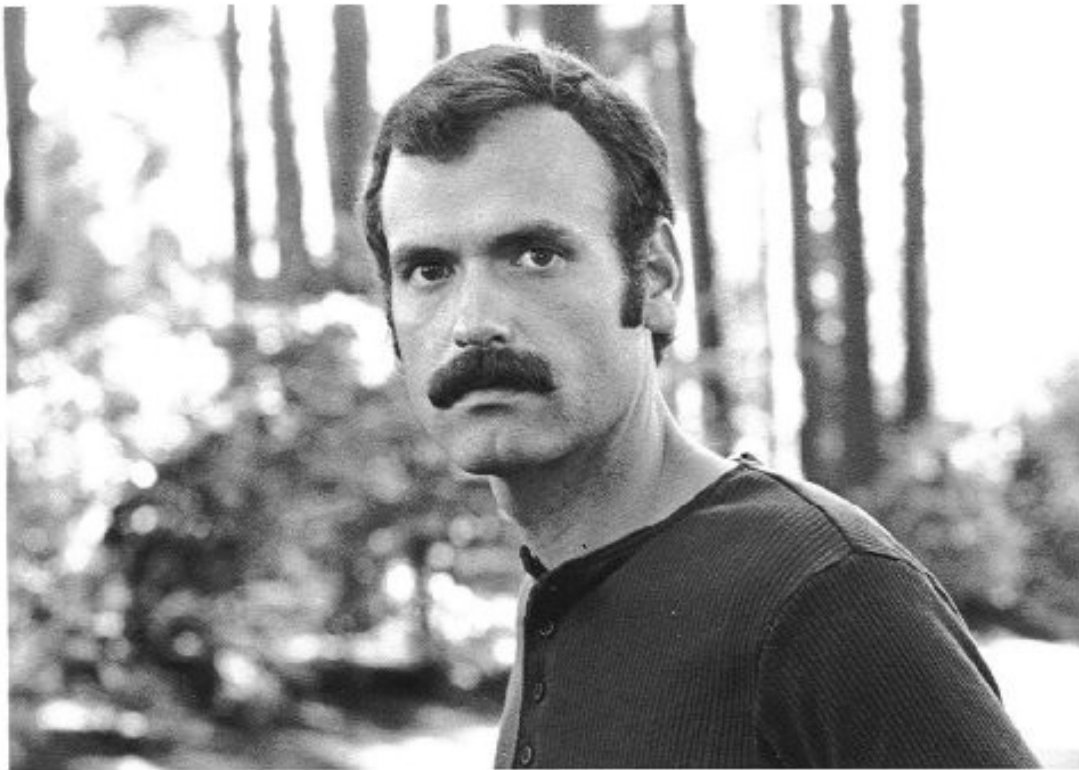
Preface to the Public Edition

At its founding in 2019, the Black Eagle Stoic Monastery made the reading of this book, *A Monastery of One* (MOO), the final requirement before one could join the monachi. This was done with the belief that if MOO was read and understood, then the new monk would be able to create his own monastery of one—a sacred place on a path that can be lonely, long, and hard. Today, the monastery has new requirements and prerequisites before becoming a monk, but MOO is still one of the final steps the novitiate must take.

MOO is an account of the author's efforts to find his way into the world of metaphysics, and it is confessional in its open honesty. It is a memoir, not an autobiography. The “public edition” is shorter because it has fewer stories and details, and it has entirely eliminated most of the information that is freely available in other books by the author, which can be found at the “Eternal Questions” website: <https://theeternalquestions.org/>

Despite the more compact size, this edition contains all the essential information needed to comprehend the original, now located at the monastery library. On a final note: Many of the names have been changed to protect the privacy of those who had the fortune or misfortune of being associated with the author for a time.

Part One: Raining Cats And Dogs



1972. The author in Sellwood Park, Portland, Oregon, USA. Photo by Dave Thorness.

Chapter One: “You're Next”

“You're next,” my father said as I entered his bedroom and study. It was 1978, and I had just flown to my parent's house in Loma Linda, California, a small city on the eastern fringe of the LA megalopolis. I lived in Cottage Grove, Oregon, and had just begun graduate school at the University of Oregon in Eugene. I was gardening in my backyard when my wife came out and told me my mother was on the phone and it was important. I went inside. That's how I learned that my father, an evangelical Protestant minister, was, um, well, insane. I was in graduate school between terms, and I able to fly down the next day.

According to mother, father had prayed for years to become a new prophet for their church, the Seventh-Day Adventist church (SDA). They believe in prophets, old and new, and after several years of sincere effort, it was apparent to him that his prayers had been answered—he had become a prophet. When father first told my mother he had been chosen by God, she believed him. But after awhile some of the things he said and did seemed odd and became increasingly worrisome.

He claimed he could look directly into the sun without damaging his eyes. This was the proof God had given him, this was a demonstration of the power of the divinity over natural causes and effects, and it proved that he had been chosen. I did not ask him to look directly into the sun for a demonstration of God's proof, and he didn't volunteer. He also wrote some kind of poetry or verse that he shoved into my hands as soon as I sat down. I read it carefully and tried not to make a hasty conclusion. Having read literature for an undergraduate major I had experienced all kinds of writing, including nonsense verse, but father's work was beyond nonsense. It was gibberish.

When mother became suspicious that things were not quite right she confessed her fears to her sister Geneva, a high school guidance counselor. Aunt Geneva told mother he was having hallucinations and that she needed to get him to a psychotherapist right away. Father was the pastor of a village church, and this could become embarrassing. Father saw the psychologist, and the psychologist confirmed Aunt Geneva's suspicions. Father was not a prophet; he was nuts. Notice of his condition was sent to his superiors at the SDA conference office, and he was quickly and quietly retired.

“You're next,” he said as soon as I entered the room. I knew exactly what he meant. Even though I had rejected religion many years before and had become an atheist leaning agnostic, or agnostic leaning atheist, he and I had always been more alike than the rest of the family. Even though I was no longer religious I had not really changed. I still had an inquiring mind of the spiritual kind. Regardless of whether “You're next” meant I was the next one in our family to become a prophet, or the next to go insane, he didn't say. I didn't ask, because I intuitively knew exactly what he meant.

As the years went by his symptoms were more silly than serious. For example, one day when I was visiting he pulled me aside conspiratorially and quietly told me to follow him outside and watch. We walked down my parent's hot and dusty, no class residential street until he spotted a car that was

apparently appropriate for his purpose. With a glance around to be sure we were unobserved, he quickly fished a rubber band out of his suit coat pocket, placed it on the radio antenna of a car, then sauntered casually back to the house with a grin. I just went along and pretended that, yes, this was great fun.

As the years went by the embarrassment lessened and father was largely ignored. Mother took charge, and he became just another dependent, a six-foot four child who was well behaved and mostly stayed out of the way. Mother went into the Board and Care business, and father was just another mouth to feed. If this was difficult for him to bear after a lifetime as head of household and as one who commanded the center of attention, he never complained. He was even given the responsibility of buying groceries, and the clerks always checked to make sure he didn't forget his wallet, again, when he walked away with the groceries.

For most of my life father was a teacher, an SDA academy English teacher. I was in his English class for two of those years, then he earned a Master's Degree in Education and went into administration. He became a principal at two SDA academies and was quite successful. In both schools he was able to transform the financial bottom line from red to black, which made him highly respected in the SDA conference.

As he entered his fifties, he became convinced he was supposed to leave education and become an ordained minister. I had already left home, living hundreds of miles away, when he was ordained and given his own church. I never saw him preach. I wouldn't set foot in a church, any church, in those days. There was nothing any religion could tell me that I didn't already know. Why should I listen to the same rubbish I had heard over and over from the time I was a toddler?

But now we have to go back seven years to discover how I got to this point in time.

* * *

Chapter Two: “You're Fired”

1971. I was drunk. I was at Fred's house in Portland, Oregon, for his annual Friday night dinner and drinks. Fred was the Regional Manager of the Group Insurance Representatives of Standard Insurance Company. Once a year Fred invited those of us in the Portland office to his house, a white, split level ranch style house in the West Hills, the good side of town. There were five of us, including the Regional Manager, six if you include his wife, but she had already gone to bed. It was getting late, after eleven. Dinner had ended a couple of hours ago; now it was just drinks. The other Group Reps had gone home, presumably to their own beds. Fred and I were sitting at his kitchen table drinking Boords London Dry Gin. His favorite.

Fred was a drunk, a functioning alcoholic. He knew it; his bosses knew it, everybody who knew him knew it, but it was OK because he was in the group sales department. “Drinking comes with the territory,” he often said. I didn't like to drink as much as my colleagues, but for some reason I wanted to drink that night. I had been a Group Rep for about a year and a half, and I felt like getting drunk. I didn't worry about driving home drunk, because it didn't matter as much in those days. A slap on the wrist if you got caught, and I never got caught.

I didn't really like the Regional Manager; no one did. He had a smart and vicious tongue, and he was as good at shredding you with it as he was at smooth-talking a company president into buying our product. But when he was drunk he was an idiot like all drunks. They were all drunks, and I didn't like any of them. And they didn't like me. Every day I went to work expecting to get fired, not due to my incompetence, but because we were in the middle of war in America, two wars—the Vietnam war and a culture war. America was changing: woman's liberation, race riots, anti-war demonstrations on campuses and on city streets, hippies dropping out and doing drugs, Richard Nixon. We started every morning with coffee in the Standard Insurance cafeteria to plan the sales strategy of the day. Every morning, coffee started and ended with me arguing one side of the war with them arguing the other.

Sometimes it got ugly. Tension ran high all over the Standard Insurance building in downtown Portland. I remember one incident in the summer of 1970 when the American Legion came to the city for their annual convention. There was an anti-Vietnam war demonstration down Broadway right in front of us. I was standing at a window on the 7th floor watching the demonstrators passing and chanting and raising their fists, and I wished I could be with them. A vice president of Individual Life Insurance Sales was standing there with me, and I could see him getting redder and redder as we watched those filthy, long-haired hippies marching passed. He was a good looking man, well dressed, about 40, and suddenly he couldn't stand it any more. He shouted rat-a-tat-tat, a spluttering verbal machine gun held his hands in front of him shaking with the effort of his imaginary assault.

But now it was just Fred the Regional Manager and I sitting at his kitchen table drinking gin. Suddenly, he said, “Now that you've had a chance to see what the real world is like, if you had to do it over again

would you have been in those anti-war demonstrations when you were in college?" The Portland Group Reps all knew I demonstrated against the war when I was in college, because I admitted at one of our morning coffee meetings.

"You really want the truth?"

"Yeah."

"Yes, I would. I would."

"OK, That's it. You're fired. Turn in you car keys Monday morning. You're fired."

He was referring to the keys to my company car. This was a suit and tie, expense account, and company car kind of sales job. We worked with insurance agents, brokers, and company executives. We had to look good. I had a wife, two small children, and a mortgage. I actually liked the job; it was the people I worked with that caused it to be so difficult. I had looked and looked for another job and couldn't find one. I wanted to be a teacher, but I didn't have a teaching credential. That would require a 5th year of college to teach at any level. I looked for work in the public sector, even social work would do, but no one would even talk to me. The last good social work jobs went out with the Johnson administration. I needed that job. I could *not* get fired.

"OK," I said, "but let's have one more drink before I go."

No one ever saw Fred turn down the offer of another drink, and this time was no exception. He looked relieved, even pleased now that the deed was done He went to a kitchen cupboard and got a new bottle down from the top shelf. It wasn't Boords Gin. This was the good gin he only drank on special occasions, he said. I didn't notice what brand it was, and it wouldn't have mattered anyway. At this point in the evening, long after I had lost count of my drinks, it all tasted the same. As soon as he poured a tumbler full and passed it over I asked him if I had ever told him about the death of my first son. He poured a tumbler of gin for himself and listened.

* *

One day in the summer of 1963, when I was 18 and in the middle of Army Basic Training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, my Platoon Sergeant said the Company Commander wanted to see me in his office. Such an event is highly irregular, and no one in Basic is called into the Captain's office unless there is a death in the family—or something equally onerous. The Sergeant went through the reporting procedure.

After clicking my heels and saluting smartly, I said,

"Sir, private Wiegardt reporting as directed, Sir!"

"At ease, Private." I shifted to Parade Rest.

"Do you know a Rhonda Baines, Private?"

"Yes, Sir. She's my girlfriend, Sir!"

The Captain went on to say he had received a letter from Rhonda explaining that she was pregnant, and he wanted to know what I was going to do about it. Without hesitation I told him I would marry her. He stared at me and asked if I was sure. I said that I was. He said that under these circumstances he would give me a 3-day pass as soon as she flew down from LA. The first day, Friday, we would get

our license from a judge in San Antonio, then we would get married in the Army chapel. I would be relieved of training on Saturday and Sunday until the afternoon. We had Saturday night for a honeymoon.

We were married in a little white chapel in the pines on the nice side of Fort Sam. Only the chaplain was there for the ceremony, no family or friends, so he brought in the gardener to be a witness. (I'm not making this up.) We stayed at the historic Menger Hotel on the grounds of the Alamo that Saturday night. Sunday morning, after paying for breakfast in the hotel, we were broke. Flat broke. I was earning \$45/month. A studio apartment would cost that much, leaving nothing for food. I told her to go back to Los Angeles and continue her postal clerk job at North American Aviation until she could save \$300. As soon as she had \$300 she could come back and rent a room off post.

After Army Basic, I stayed on at Fort Sam Houston for their training in the Medical Corps. As a medic and Seventh-Day Adventist, I was eligible for Operation Whitecoat. The Army was convinced that SDA boys were healthier than average because we didn't smoke, drink, and were mostly vegetarian. Well, I had started smoking and drinking, but the Army didn't know. And, when I tasted meat for the first time in my life I couldn't get enough of it. Loved it. All these guys around me complaining about Army chow? Are you kidding? I had never tasted food so good. But I had a pregnant wife now, and if I got into Operation Whitecoat I would be stationed in Washington, DC. Otherwise, it was likely to be Germany or South Korea, and it was doubtful Judy would be able to join me until after the baby was born. If it was South Korea, probably not at all.

If I got into Operation Whitecoat I would only be required to participate in one medical experiment at Fort Detrick, Maryland, the Army biological warfare unit. The rest of the time I would be at Walter Reed Army Hospital, which is where I went—although in my case I went to a metabolic lab in Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR). I had heard lab jobs were the best, better than emptying bedpans, so I lied and told the Army I had three years of laboratory classes in college. They took my word for it, never checked, never knew I had never set foot in a laboratory in my life. I had never taken physics or chemistry in the SDA academy and had even taken biology by correspondence because I was in a hurry to finish high school in three years instead of the usual four.

I did my time in WRAIR collecting and processing 17-keto steroids from hypophysectomized white lab rats. We did this by sticking a hypodermic needle in the rat's ear, removing the pituitary gland, then listening to them scream and hurl their bodies against the metal cage until it was time for surgery several hours later. In surgery we cut open their chests, drained blood out of their femoral artery, chopped up their hearts when we were finished, and tossed their lifeless bodies down a chute built into the wall expressly for that purpose. I was the certified rat handler. I considered myself lucky, because the guys who cut up dogs really seemed depressed a lot. Even so, lucky or not, I could never eat meat on rat surgery day, Thursdays. Any kind of meat I ate that day smelled like rats.

Rhonda continued to get more pregnant. I was making \$120/month now that I was married, and we had a small room with a bath down the hall in the upstairs of a Mr. and Mrs. Noe's old house in Tacoma, Maryland, two blocks from the DC border. Easy walking distance from WRAIR and right on a bus line. Money was tight but we managed, and we even went out to see a movie once a week in a

theater down the block that showed old movies for \$1. Other than that our only entertainment was taking a bus down to the capital mall and surroundings to see what we could see for free. Quite a lot is free, actually.

We climbed the Washington monument. Well, part of the way up the monument until Rhonda got tired climbing while carrying a 7-month-old fetus. No matter. We turned around and came down when she was ready. Went home, everything was fine, had a good dinner, went to bed, and in the middle of the night I was awakened by a her voice.

“I'm having contractions,” she said.

Our baby boy was premature and couldn't leave the incubator. He was tiny, but perfect, even beautiful, but we couldn't hold him. We stood at the window and tried to get his attention, but he was just trying to stay alive and he was too young to see us, but we tried anyway. Every day we went back to the hospital and stood there during visiting hours, looking and waiving. We called him Gregory Jefferson, and we asked the nurse or doctor, any nurse or doctor we could find, how he was doing. They always said the same thing. It's too early, don't get your hopes up, he may be too young to breathe on his own. Sometimes they just stop breathing for no reason. After two weeks of looking and praying we got a telephone call. He had stopped breathing. We were told to come in and make arrangements for him to be buried.

* *

Fred told me to stop. He didn't want to hear any more. He was crying, actually crying, with rasping grunts that may have been sobs. I stopped and took a swallow of my gin—no mixer, just gin. He took out a handkerchief. He was shaking drunk. He started wiping his eyes before he took off his gasses, and they fell to the floor. He pushed back his chair and got down on his hands and knees to look for them. They were somewhere under the kitchen table. Where were they? I didn't help him look for them. I gulped the last of my gin, stood up, walked out his front door, and drove home.

When I went to work Monday morning, Fred the Regional Manager and I pretended nothing happened. Neither of us ever spoke of that night again, and I went on as I always did planning my escape. My first plan was law school. I applied and got accepted to Lewis and Clark College's Northwestern School of Law. Night school. Rhonda and the kids were crowded out of existence by my day job, plus classes four nights a week, plus reading, plus large student loans.

After three months I dropped out. The stress of a job that could end any day combined with reading tomes packed with legal language about as exciting as the fine print we have all seen on every contract we've ever made put an end to my fantasies of a law career. There was absolutely no way I was going to spend the rest of my life reading that rubbish. When I announced at work that I had quit night law school Fred confided it was fortunate, because I would have been fired if I hadn't. A few months later I replaced night law school with the first real passion of my life, sculpture. I wanted a plaster bust of Mark Twain. he had been my literary hero since I was in college, but I soon found that a bust of Twain didn't exist in my city. So, I decided I would make one myself. I signed up for a sculpture class two nights a week at a local Community College.

I didn't know anything about sculpture; and, except for a single life drawing class my final term at Portland State, I had never studied art. By the time I signed up for my second night class the sculpture instructor realized I was serious, and against all sensible rules gave me a key to the sculpture studio. I was free to come every night after work and on weekends, too, if I wished—which is exactly what I did. Sculpture became the only thing I cared about.

My home life was a shambles, but at least I wasn't a drunk. I just wasn't there. Being a straight arrow, suit-and-tie junior executive by day and a budding sculptor by night may have been possible to maintain for a long time, but having a wife and two small children was bound to bring our marriage to ruin. After about a year and a half of living only for sculpture my wife and I separated. There is nothing I can say to make this easier for either of us. A year later, when our divorce was final, I ran away from home. At 29 years of age I ran away from home.

I was heading West on Highway 26. It was a Saturday morning in the autumn of 1974. The sky was clear and blue, the kind of azure sky you only get in western Oregon in the autumn, and I was going to see my uncle Don Wilson at his house at Canon Beach, the Oregon coast. I had only recently met my uncle, my father's half brother, because my instructor Richard Helzer repeatedly insisted I do so. When he found that I was related to Don Wilson, the most famous stone sculptor of the Pacific Northwest, he insisted I take the initiative and go see him.

Don Wilson was a stone carver and printmaker and I never knew him because my paternal grandmother forbade any contact with her ex-husband, my real grandfather, or any of his kind. And we obeyed. We obeyed because we were all afraid of Grandma Wiegardt, but she was dead then I we could visit whomever we wished. I went to visit my real grandfather, but I had never met Don Wilson, his son by his second wife. Don was a recluse, not because he disliked people but because he liked stone carving more. I understood that. I found his address by telling the Schnitzer gallery owner the story of our broken family. She gave me his address, no phone. He immediately became my mentor.

I was heading West on Highway 26 to see my Uncle Don Wilson. It was a Saturday morning in the autumn of 1974. The sky was clear and blue, and I was driving the company car. It was all I had. A thought suddenly came to me out of the azure blue sky, "The only thing that keeps me from doing it is just doing it." I knew exactly what that meant, and I couldn't stop repeating it to myself over and over. I got into the fast lane, then slowed down enough to cross the grassy median and go back the way I came. I went to my apartment, packed a change of underwear and drove to California.

Then I got fired.

* *

It was a couple of months later, late December in Portland, cold and wet as always. It would be at least six months, probably more, before the weather was warm enough to put away the coat and umbrella. I had never been to Puerto Rico, and I heard the beaches there were amazing, so I decided to hitchhike. I could afford a plane ticket from Miami to San Juan, but I would have to hitchhike the rest of the way. Maybe I would live in Puerto Rico for awhile; I didn't know. I stood in the pouring rain and was soaked through by the time I got my first ride. It was in an old car with a young man, and he was

out of his mind on something. He showed me his stash in the glove compartment and invited me to help myself. It was a drug store. I stayed clear headed to keep us on the road all the way to Grants Pass. When he stopped to pee at a public rest area I disappeared behind the toilets until he left without me.

I kept a traveling salesman awake by encouraging him to tell me stories of his sexual conquests; I sat on the floor of a hippy van crowded with hippies; slept in a ditch beside a freeway on-ramp; walked all night in a pitch dark desert; walked the entire length of the Houston ghetto as fast as I could; slept behind a rest area toilet; celebrated New Year's Eve in New Orleans; watched the speedometer bounce at 110 miles per hour in a Camaro muscle car with a guy who had a cast from his toes to his hip and who was smoking cannabis nonstop with the radio volume full bast the length of the Florida panhandle; and I sat behind a huge nun in a Cadillac who said "Praise Jesus" at the end of every sentence all the way to Miami. I didn't like Puerto Rico as much as I hoped I would and came home.

I moved in with Anna—a woman my age that I had picked up while shopping in an upholstery shop. I had no where else to stay. I had no money, no job, and no prospects. What little savings I had went to pay child support. I saw my children occasionally, but not as often as I could have and should have, and I felt guilty. I didn't know what to do with them. I didn't know how to be a father. I had no money. I didn't have a car. We couldn't go anywhere or do anything. What was I supposed to do, sit there and look at them? I moved in with Anna. She was a Registered Nurse. She had a good job, her own money, her own car, her own little rented house; and, honestly, I needed her more than I loved her. We didn't get along. She had her opinions and I had mine, but there were good times, too, and we bought a 100-year-old Victorian house together in Ashland, Oregon.

It was called Toad Hall, an Ashland landmark, and it was a wreck. I never knew why it was called Toad Hall. No one I asked knew why. Anna stayed in Portland where she worked, and I stayed in Toad Hall, which was divided into four units. I could live rent free for managing the place, she would provide the money, and I would do the repairs. She didn't have a lot of money, and I didn't have a lot of skill repairing an old Victorian house that was in need of *everything*—plumbing, wiring, dry rot, foundation, roof, paint, and yard work. I took three large trailer loads of garbage to the county dump just cleaning the yard enough to have a yard. If it hadn't been for Allen Williams next door who knew how to do *everything*, I would have never survived.

Anna thought I was wasting my time and her money. We argued constantly for about a year or so, then got married. She moved in with me at Toad Hall, and I joined the Army. Well, the National Guard. I always wanted to be an Army officer ever since I was an enlisted man and quickly realized the US military was based on an old feudal aristocracy, and the enlisted men were the peasants.

Before my unemployment benefits ran out I tried to get a job at the only TV station in southern Oregon. I remembered reading something Mark Twain said that if you had trouble finding work you could always get a job by volunteering to work for free. Then as soon as they realized how useful you were they would hire you for wages. I tried that. The station manager thought working for free was a great idea, but the general manager didn't buy it and told me to take a hike. When my unemployment ran out I got my first job in a year as a waiter in the Blue Max Restaurant in Medford. I had no idea

what I was doing, but Rose the manager at the Blue Max was a good teacher, and I've always been so grateful to her. I tried teaching sculpture at night school, but no one showed up for my class.

I hitchhiked 300 miles to the Oregon Military Academy in Clackamas my first weekend of training, then I got rides with others I met in the Academy. I graduated and got into the Infantry Officer School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Anna and I sold Toad Hall for more the twice what we paid for it and went to Georgia where I discovered I was the oldest Second Lieutenant in the class. About 85% of the class were recent graduates of West Point, and my age, almost 10 years older than the average, didn't set well with them. The snide remarks started. "Oh no, Sergeant, we can't do X (fill in the exercise) Wiegardt may have a heart attack, et cetera. Just to be certain it wasn't my imagination I picked an average day and counted the number of times I was publicly castigated for my age. Sixteen. But the Infantry Officer School was one of the best educations of my life.

I was now an Infantry Officer, but I was going to be an artist, a sculptor. I got accepted into the University of Oregon Master of Fine Arts program on the basis of my portfolio, the work I had done with Richard Helzer and Don Wilson, my uncle. We moved to Cottage Grove, Oregon. My father went insane. I already wrote about that. The Battalion Commander of my National Guard unit looked and sounded just like my old boss, the big boss, the one that was even more difficult than Fred, and that didn't set well with me. Not again. Never again. I resigned my officer's commission. After about the umpteenth time Anna suggested we get a divorce I agreed. I lived in an abandoned shack at an abandoned airport in Springfield, a few miles from the University of Oregon campus. And that takes us up to 1980 when I graduated and the first time I went to Japan.

* * * *

Chapter Three: “You're Too Damned Slow!”

1983, I was in the cantina of Cisco and Pancho's, a Mexican Restaurant in old town, Portland, Oregon. leaving a tip for the bartender. I was a waiter, had been a waiter there for more than two years. I was startled when Monty, the General Manager bellowed,

“You have to turn tables faster! He said.” It was around midnight on a Saturday night, the shift was over, and the General Manager was sitting at a table in a dark corner of the cantina. He was drunk again, and he was mad.

“Hey, I just broke Cisco and Pancho's record for highest ring-out,” I said. It was true. That meant I had broken the record for the most food and beverages sold by a single waiter in a single shift since the restaurant opened about 6 years before.

“I don't give a shit,” Monty said. You're too damned slow!”

That did it—the straw that broke me. I was done. I was done trying to push people around—push them in by cutting short their orders and push them out by pulling their plates before they had finished eating. That's what you do to turn tables faster. I wanted every table to have a good dining experience; I couldn't imagine it any other way. That's why I was almost always the highest tipped waiter. We compared our tips for the night and knew. Unfortunately, although it was advertised as a fine dining Mexican restaurant in Portland, one that used cloth instead of paper napkins, it was not. They only cared about quick turnover, high volume, quantity over quality, and I didn't belong.

I was going back to Japan. I was done. To me being a waiter was a performance, dining was theater, and that was the only thing that made the job worth doing. It was a high stress job, both physically and psychologically. Most of the tables were on the second floor of an old converted warehouse, and the food came from the kitchen at one end of the first floor and the drinks came from the cantina at other. We ran up and down stairs without a break for three hours on the lunch shift and six hours at dinner. “Faster, faster, faster” was all I ever heard. I was going back to Japan.

I had a girlfriend. She could come too. She was a busser at Cisco and Pancho's, the highest tipped busser night after night. I was a performer; she was an efficient speed demon. The waiters loved her; she could clean and reset a table faster than anyone we had ever seen—and she was tipped by us accordingly. This was her job while she was going to Portland State. She was half my age, but much older than any girl of 19 I had ever known. We were called the “Gruesome Twosome” by the other workers at the restaurant, but we didn't care. We were friends first, then without even trying we became lovers. We started planning our Japanese adventure.

* * * *

Chapter Four: A Japanese Fishing Village

I didn't want to be an artist anymore. Not that I was an artist; I just didn't want to be one anymore. The first crack in my resolve began in graduate school when I attended a lecture by the American sculptor, George Sugarman (1912-1999). He said that 3/4ths of his work was in self-promotion and one-fourth of his time was spent in actually doing art. I was stunned, and his words never left me.

Many years before I had been attracted to art because of sculpture, especially stone sculpture. For several years I worked in stone, but the more I worked, the more I became attracted to the stone and not the carving or finished form. In time, I finally admitted to myself that I had never known any sculpture as sensuous or majestic as a great stone weathered by ages of wind and rain. The truth I intuitively came to know told me I had never seen any work of art fashioned by any artist, living or dead, as beautiful as a common wildflower, or even a weed for that matter. One by one, all forms of art turned into artifice.

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The Inland Sea was still. The Nishikiwa harbor was still. Six-inch waves barely wet the black rocks at the foot of the concrete jetty. Behind us, fishing boats bumped each other as they gently tugged at their moorings. The day's catch, long since auctioned off, now rested still and glassy eyed in village.

Amielle, my young girlfriend, and I looked east into the flat blue sea turning gray at the horizon. It was an autumn afternoon, crisp and clear. Elementary school kids in packs of six or seven, boys with boys and girls with girls, would be jostling and poking their way homeward soon. Their navy blue uniforms and caps and black leather knapsacks would smell of recess, fidgety sweat, and rote memory drill. The girls would giggle and whisper behind their hands. The boys would be shouting, their laughter shrill.

"Let's go home," I said.

"What are we going to do?" she asked.

"I don't know." I really didn't know.

We walked past the Buddhist temple atop the only hill in town. A narrow, roughly chiseled stone stairway led the way up. It was bordered on both sides by small houses crowded in with pine trees, fruit trees, and other deep green foliage. Only the temple bell tower could be seen from below. The priest and his family went about their business unseen, but seeing a sweeping view of the Inland Sea, the harbor, and the village graveyard a little further and on the left.

Past a rice shop, always dusty, we turned right at the Shinto Shrine. This one was dedicated to the safety and prosperity of those who harvested the sea. It's mottled gray ceramic tile roof capped a building slightly smaller than the average fisherman's house. The unpainted and sea weathered wood siding was cracked and aging beyond repair. As usual, there was litter scattered around the hard

packed , bare dirt grounds. When I first came to Nishikiwa and saw the pop bottles, cans, candy wrappers, plastic and paper bags I would stop and pick them up. But it never got any better, and the neighbors stood and stared, not in a good way, and I decided to mind my own business and leave the mess alone.

We crossed the only main street in town and turned down the path beside the persimmon trees. They were beginning to lose their yellowing leaves as their fruit ripened from orange to scarlet. Past the persimmon orchard we we pushed our way through the weeds and brush on the east side of the estate. When we came to the main house, a traditional wooden, pre-World War Two structure we noted that Gloria wasn't in the driveway. Gloria was the brand name of a car, the master's pride and joy, a Japanese luxury sedan not exported to America, and if Gloria wasn't there they probably weren't there either. We stopped talking as I pushed aside the sliding wooden door and entered the long hallway connecting our apartment. We looked across the inner garden into our kitchen. No one. We resumed our conversation.

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We came to Japan from Portland, Oregon, that April of 1983. I came to teach conversational English. I'd done it before. It was easier than waiting tables at Cisco and Pancho's, the Mexican restaurant where I could never turn tables fast enough to keep the General Manager off my back. We landed at Narita Airport on the northern edge of Tokyo. From the airport I phoned for a reservation at English House, and address and phone number I'd saved from an earlier time. They were still in business, and they had a room.

We stuffed our baggage and ourselves into a subway train and headed for Mejiro Station, a long way from the airport but a short stop just south of Ikebukuro on the Yamanote line. English House was about a half mile east, past Gakushuin University, past Twice A Day Carrot Cafe, and inauspiciously squeezed in among a dense cluster of apartments, tea shops, produce shops, butcher shops, and small houses crowding each other behind rows of street side vending machines. A common Tokyo neighborhood. We carried everything we owned on our back and in our hands.

English House was a faded gray stucco, 1950s attempt to update a *ryokan*, a traditional travelers inn, with even or eight small rooms for rent on the second floor. The rooms were rented by the day, week, or month, and each had tatami straw flooring and a well-worn futon to sleep on. Nothing else. On the first floor there was one toilet and shower for all residents, and a large communal kitchen where most of us hung out when we weren't sleeping in our rooms. The kitchen had a table with several hard chairs, four propane-fueled gas burner rings, a refrigerator that was always stuffed with everyone's bags and bottles and fish and vegetables. There was a 13-inch Black and white TV that only worked occasionally. English House was a favorite with young travelers, all *gaijin*, foreigners, round-eyes. And it was cheap.

I should give a little background to teaching conversational English in Japan. After World War Two, Japanese students were required to study English. Mandatory. Most of them studied the language with all the enthusiasm of a conscripted pacifist. Armed with six years of classroom-directed mumbling in unison they became high school graduates who could almost be understood when they

said,

“Hello.”

“What's your name?”

“How old are you?”

“Where are you from?”

“Why are you in Japan?”

“Excuse me, I don't speak English.”

After graduation from high school or college, conversational English became a fashionable hobby, a national pastime for executives, shopkeepers, housewives, bartenders—everyone who had or expected to have contact with *gaijin*. For many, especially Japanese housewives, taking English classes was a way to be modern and socialize with friends. It was all form, not substance that mattered. Fluency was seldom expected or desired.

I once had the naivete to introduce five common prepositions (in, on, around, under, and through) to a class of seven or eight middle-aged housewives. On average my students had studied English for eight years. When I wrote the prepositions on the blackboard and drew some silly illustrations to show how these words worked, they refused to speak. Not a word. After a lengthy and embarrassed silence, one woman was delegated to get the principal and owner of the school, a Japanese woman about their age. She came out and explained to me that what I was trying to do was too difficult. She suggested I try to be more entertaining. “Class is only for fun,” she said.

Back at English House, most of the *gaijin* were looking for work. Private conversational English schools were the primary employers, but bars and nightclubs also hired the more open-minded young good-looking young women who were desperate. The last time I was at English House (1980), there were more Americans and fewer Germans, French, Australians, and British. To escape their current recession, young Brits were coming over in record numbers. I didn't mind competing with the Brits, but the French and Germans were claiming to be native speakers—and getting away with it. But to be fair, I always found a German speaking English easier to understand than a Scotsman or Liverpoolian.

We didn't have a lot of cash when we arrived, and my old contacts didn't know of any work. After two weeks without a job or prospect and our cash reserve almost gone we were in trouble. We didn't have enough money to return to the States. I always read the notices on the English House bulletin board, but the only jobs that were being offered were for single classes someone wanted to dump because it was near Yokohama or someplace so far it would take up half a day to get there and back, and half the teacher's wages to pay the train fare.

I rarely met another *gaijin* who actually had a teaching visa. For that status, you needed to find a sponsor, a licensed school, and endure an ordeal of bureaucratic forms, credentials, and at least one trip to a Japanese embassy outside the country. South Korea was the closest. When I was there in 1980, anyone could get a tourist visa and pick up whatever classes you needed to pay for your stay, then leave when your visa expired. You weren't supposed to teach on a tourist visa, of course, but the schools didn't care. Teachers came and went, lied about their visas when asked, supplied their own replacements, and took their wages in cash. No one paid taxes. There were a hundred mom and pop

operations for every legitimate school. In the provinces, even small schools had to offer teaching visas just to get anyone out there. Country schools sometimes advertised in places like English House. I saw one of those notices on the bulletin board, and I put it in my pocket.

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Chapter Five: The Academy

Nishikiwa was almost as far from Tokyo as you can get and still be on the main island of Honshu. It was in the western prefecture, Yamaguchi, about 500 miles away. Nishikiwa was remote, a small fishing village not large enough to be on a tourist map. It shared a post office with Ube, a town several miles inland. Ube was large enough to be found on a map, but only if you knew exactly where to look for it. Approximately translated, Nishikiwa means “west wave.”

Nishikiwa had one main street I could walk from one end to the other in about five minutes. There was a grocery store, a hardware store, several liquor stores, a stationary store, a dry cleaning shop, several small cafes, sushi takeout, and a few other shops I can't remember. There was a small railroad station two blocks off the main street, a branch of the national railroad system that makes it impossible to be really lost anywhere in Japan. There was nothing big in Nishikiwa. The shops were seldom larger than the average American living room, and the shopkeepers hadn't yet adopted the Tokyo trick of paneling the walls with mirrors to make the room appear larger.

As in all of rural Japan, the height of the doors and overhanging signs were designed to hang just above the heads of the native inhabitants, which denied the existence of people six feet tall or taller. At six feet and one inch, I learned to hang my head as I walked. Sometimes I forgot, and the top of my head was always sore. There were a total of three foreigners, including Amielle and me, in all of Nishikiwa and Ube. The residents of Ube stopped whatever they were doing and stared in a look of astonishment when any one of us walked by. The folks in Nishikiwa knew there were English teachers in their midst.

Although Ube English Academy was at one end of the main street of Nishikiwa, it was named after the much larger town miles away. The “academy” consisted of a two-room, rectangular building about 20 X 50 feet with a squat toilet in the middle and a small office at one end. At ten years old it was one of the newer buildings in the village and was cheaply constructed, a sight most unusual in Japan where quality control is a national obsession. It was a western prefab building in the midst of ancient houses passed own by generations of provincial people. Directly across the street was a liquor store built onto the front of a family residence. The store was open for as many hours of the day as the family was awake. When it closed, there remained a bank of vending machines that sold sake, beer, and whiskey. The vending machines never closed.

On one side of the Academy was a cluster of small residences with a family vegetable shop, another family with sushi take-out, and a bank of vending machines with ice cream, soda, and pre-packaged sushi. On the other side of us was a much larger family residence with chickens in the yard and a barn in front with a cow inside that we never saw, only heard when it mooed. Across the street from the barn and sharing the property with the Academy was a small city hall that had a World War Two air raid siren mounted on a 40-foot steel tower. It sounded the alarm seven days a week at eight in the morning and six in the evening for a full three minutes. I timed it. The siren was so loud that all

thought and conversation for a one mile radius ceased. I asked my students what it was for, and no one knew.

Mr. Yasutake, the owner of Ube English Academy and my new boss, met Amielle and me at the Shinkansen (bullet train) station about 10 miles from Nishikiwa. He had paid Mrs. Harris, a British woman who lived in Tokyo and claimed she had 100 cats, to interview and recommend applicants for the job. She is the one who had put the notice on the bulletin board at English House. After an interview with Mrs. Harris I was recommended for the job.

Mr. Yasutake didn't hire his English teachers directly for three reasons. One, the Japanese traditionally prefer an *omiai*, a go-between, for all business, social or family affairs. Secondly, the cost and effort necessary for him to be in Tokyo for the selection process would be greater than it would be to pay someone else. And third, his command of English was so poor that even if he wanted to he couldn't manage a hiring interview and wouldn't know if I was speaking proper English or pig Latin. Lacking even rudimentary English skill was not uncommon for owners of conversational English schools.

Mr. Yasutake was in his late forties, maybe 50, average Japanese male height and build with thinning, dull black and obviously dyed hair, which he encouraged to grow over his most distinguishing feature: jug ears. He had the pale, waxy coloring of one intimidated by physical exertion and the great outdoors. When he spoke, either in Japanese or English, he spoke with hesitation and the habit of saying, *Nani*, (literally, "what?") two or three times before, during, and after every statement. He sounded as if he didn't know what he was going to say, what he was saying, or what he had just said. Amielle and I gave him the nickname, "Nani."

He met Amielle and me with his favored and fastidiously maintained Gloria, the late-model, wine red, luxury four-door sedan with a plush gray velveteen interior, and lace doilies draped over the seat backs. Several Kewpie dolls hung from the knobs of the radio. Nani was with a woman he introduced as his secretary. Her name was Yoko. She was actually his live-in girlfriend, and according to whispers of the local fisher folk she was at one time a pass around *Yakuza* moll. (The name of the Japanese mafia is pronounced, YAK uza, not ya KUSA) Yoko was in her mid-thirties with a grossness of appearance and personality that was heavy, crude, overbearing, and angry. Her face resembled that of a pig, and the nickname we soon gave her I won't repeat here.

The Yasutake estate, an estate by Japanese standards, was built by Nani's father, the village doctor. The doctor and his wife, unable to have children of their own, had in their later years acquired him as a child by the old Japanese custom of purchasing a child from a family with more children than they could afford. The doctor died, leaving a grand and traditional Japanese home, a clinic converted into a small two bedroom house, a windowless, two-story structure rumored to hold the family treasures, and a long row of maintenance and storage sheds. All this was contained on a lot of about an acre.

Many years ago the estate had apparently been landscaped in the traditional style with trees, stones, and bushes, including an inner garden with a small pond and carp. At one time it must have been the pride and envy of Nishikiwa. When Amielle and I arrived, it was obvious the estate had been struggling for years with neglect: vines climbing up to overpower branches of trees, weeds in riotous abundance,

and silt thickening and choking the pond and the carp. Everywhere on that estate was the sinister in bloom, a tangled wall of despair pressing down upon despondency. It was springtime in the rest of the world.

Our apartment was connected to the main house by a long hallway that started at the only bathroom and toilet, located immediately beside Yasutake's kitchen where he and Yoko always sat. The hall continued as a passageway to various parts of the house and defined three sides of the inner garden. Our apartment was the fourth side at the far end. It had two rooms, a bedroom and kitchen, each approximately 8x10 feet. The bedroom had a tatami mat floor and an unfinished ceiling. There was a single, bare light bulb hanging down in the center of the room. One wall had plaster aged to a spotted and smokey amber. Another wall was a curtained, sliding glass door that opened out to the inner garden. On the opposite side was a window that faced the "treasure house" a few yards away. The bedroom was separated from the kitchen by shoji, the paper paneled, sliding wood frame door. The room was empty except for an old wooden end table I rescued from a pile of trash in a storage shed. We slept on a double futon.

Actually, the double futon started out as a single. It was only exchanged to a larger size after a lengthy and frustrating discussion with Mr. Yasutake soon after our arrival. Not wanting to get things off to a bad start, I ignored the filth and general messiness that greeted us, the dirty floor, the dirty table, the dirty dishes in the sink, the dirty linen thrown here and there. We could clean that up tomorrow, but I had to insist that two hulking gaijin could not sleep comfortably on a single futon that night. As best I could I explained that it was smaller than a single mattress in America, only large enough for an American child. Nani, I was quick to learn, invariably met a simple problem or request with an exasperating sidestep into silliness. He suggested we sleep closer together.

In Tokyo, I signed a one-year contract that Mrs. Harris promised was a professional position and a nicely furnished apartment for two. On our first day I began to wonder. I persisted with the futon problem, and he finally agreed to get a larger one. Hours later, just before midnight, he returned dragging a double futon he got from one of the empty rooms of the main house. It was stained and flattened with years of use, but we slept on it anyway. It took four months to get a newer one.

The kitchen. One wall of the kitchen was a sliding glass door covered by some gauze material serving as a transparent curtain that made privacy impossible. On that side, we had a small table and two chairs. The opposite wall had cupboards and storage shelves. The ceiling was also unfinished and included the same primitive, hanging light bulb as in the bedroom. The floor was covered by old, stained and chipped linoleum. There was a small stainless steel sink and two burner gas rings for a stove. The rings were connected by an exposed, copper tube that led to a propane tank hanging on the wall outside. There were a few dishes and cooking utensils of the poorest quality, much abused by wear. It was insufficient to prepare even a meager and monotonous meal for two.

After trying to manage with the dishes and cookware we had, we gave up and requested more. Mr. Yasutake suggested we eat out more often. I explained that we liked to cook and eat at home. Also, I wasn't making enough money to eat out more often, but I didn't confront him with that. He said that because Amielle was so young she wouldn't know how to use pots and pans properly and would only

“break” them, assuming that because she was the woman she would be doing the cooking. I assured him we would both be cooking and that we would both take excellent care of them. He said he see if Yoko had any dishes she didn't want. We waited. He waited. When I go my first paycheck we bought what we needed, and he won.

The other English teacher. I was at the kitchen table preparing notes for my classes and didn't know how the shouting got started, who said what to whom. By the time I put down my pen and stood up to watch, they were already in the thick of it. Dick Brown, the other English teacher, was shouting and shaking his finger in Mr. Yasutake's pale and plainly frightened face. They were standing toe to toe in the inner garden, only about ten feet away, Dick was spluttering expletives in such a rush I couldn't comprehend the gist of it. I was still wondering what it was about when he appeared to run out of words and abruptly left. I turned from the window and saw through the open shoji that Yuriko, Dick's girlfriend, was walking back and forth and crying outside our bedroom window. Amielle went out to see what was the matter, and I went back to my notes.

It was our first introduction to Dick and Yuriko. Usually they kept to themselves in the two-bedroom house behind the main house, the one that used to be the doctor's clinic. Yuriko was from Tokyo, but had lived with Dick in Nishikiwa for nearly a year. She was 28, an age when Japanese women suffered from intense social pressure, bordering on panic, to be married. She was attractive enough, but much too Western in her interests and ways for most Japanese men. Living with a gaijin as she had been with Dick eliminated all hope. She told Amielle that Mr. Yasutake called her a whore for reasons which were either untranslatable or incomprehensible, but she said it was for no reason at all. When Dick heard of it, he confronted Mr. Yasutake and created the disturbance we just witnessed. From Amielle's new position as confidant, we learned other unpleasant things.

Dick Brown was the only other teacher at the Academy. Besides Amielle and me he was the only other *gaijin* in the village and Ube. We could have been friends except that he suffered from a snobbery that made him less than friendly or easily approachable. According to Yuriko, he detested Americans. In appearance he was rather ordinary. He was about 30, six feet, and showed a puffy pudginess that looked like a steadily increasing appreciation for Japanese beer. He was pasty white with shaggy brown hair, brown eyes, and wire rimmed glasses. He wore a brown suit, the same suit every day, walked flat-footed in brown shoes, and drove a brown, subcompact car he called a rubber-band-mobile. Yuriko claimed he was verbally and physically abusive, enjoyed tying her up and burning her with cigarette butts when he was drunk. I don't know. I never saw any of this, and I never asked him about it.

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Chapter Six: The Treasure House

or

A Hole in the Wall

I never called myself an artist. Well, a few times I did. A few times when I got stuck by the what-do-you-do question I called myself an artist and was immediately embarrassed afterwards. I was educated to be an artist, a sculptor, actually. I had a little talent, a Master of Fine Arts degree, and I was trying, had been trying for more than ten years to be an artist. I came to Japan to teach English as a means of survival while I studied pottery. That was my real interest at the time. Pottery as created and revered in Japan was an art form worthy of a sculptor. I was excited about coming to Nishikiwa because it was located in the renowned Hagi region.

When you live in a great pottery region in Japan you use the same native clay, forms, and techniques as everyone else in that region. Hagi is one of the three great pottery regions, second only to Kyoto. The Japanese have a saying about the three great regions: “Ichi, raku; Ni, Hagi; and San, Karatsu.” The opportunity to study pottery in the Hagi region is what persuaded me to leave Tokyo in the first place. Horror stories abounded of *gaijin* stranded in remote parts of the empire. Isolation and culture shock was an ever-present danger, but I was sure luck had found me at last. I indulged in great fantasies about the pottery I would do there. Within a week of my arrival it was clear the only thing I would do in the renowned Hagi region was teach English.

The classes Dick Brown and I taught began at eight in the morning and ended at 10 PM, six days a week. They were scattered throughout the day and throughout the Yamaguchi Prefecture, especially Ube, Onoda, and Shimonoseki. When we weren't teaching we were commuting by train or taxi to the next class in another factory, kindergarten, bank or executive office. A few afternoons and evenings we taught at the school on the Yasutake estate. On the seventh day, Sunday, we were free, and I rested. On his own initiative, Dick had brought in some of our biggest and best paying accounts. He also helped Nani with the books and knew how much the classes were paying. One day of teaching paid Dick's and my wages. The other five went straight to Yasutake.

Mr. Yasutake didn't know enough English to teach or even directly supervise what we were doing. His only contribution to the business was to make up the schedule and order the taxis when they were needed. Actually, his “secretary” Yoko did that. From his share, the lion's share of the profits, he maintained the estate, owned and operated the luxurious Gloria, supported a voraciously consuming mistress, sent his son (by a former wife who ran away with a previous English teacher) to one of the most expensive private colleges in Japan, and filled his days and nights with drinking and taking frequent and unannounced holidays from the boredom of having nothing to do. My wages were radically reduced by the top market value he charged for our two room hovel, leaving us only enough money to eat mackerel, white rice, and cucumbers—at home.

All week it rained. It had to rain. It was summertime, and this summer lay on the village like a tropical

fever. Cicadas joined the fever with their electric vibrations throbbing through the soggy air into a world that was weeping, oozing, dripping, crawling down walls, pooling on ledges, and demanding sweat from every pore and orifice. It had to rain. The air, the atmosphere simply couldn't take it anymore. All week it rained—hot rain by day, warm rain at night. Sunday it cleared.

Nani, Yoko, and Gloria were gone. They hadn't been seen for days, and we didn't know where they were. We dared hope foul play was at foot, some unfinished business Yoko had with the Yakuza, perhaps. We'd seen a couple of their kind skulking about recently with their slick hair, shiny silk suits, and expensive cars that shouted without a word in a hardworking fishing village. But we knew the trio were probably just playing at a Kyushu Island resort they favored when the physical or emotional climate at home was unpleasant. We imagined what fun it must be for them to be on holiday laughing at the stupid *gaijin* who made their life of leisure possible.

It was Sunday, and a patch of blue in the sky attracted my attention. I went to the bedroom window where a fresh breeze blew from the Inland Sea. The ground was swollen and smelled of slugs and wet muck. Weeds, trees, flowers, and bushes were flattened and bedraggled by the hard rain. To my right, cracks in the unpainted, wooden walls of the storage sheds nurtured sprouting seeds and moss. Directly across the driveway that separated us, the treasure house stood. The side next to the sheds was always in the shade and mottled with mildew and rot. It crumbed in spots. Small piles of fine plaster rubble collected on the ground unnoticed among the old boxes, boards, tires, and other junk a lazy gardener tosses out of sight and out of mind. Near the middle, about waist high, there was a spot above the rubbish that was absolutely black. It looked like a hole.

I decided to investigate. Amielle and I took a precautionary walk around the estate. No one. We got a flashlight and crawled over the garbage. It *was* a hole, and it was big enough for her, but not quite big enough for me. The wall was thick. It was gritty and cracked around the opening like sand mixed with watery glue. I removed a few chunks that broke away in my hands. Now it was big enough. I crawled in and helped Amielle in behind me.

We waited a minute for our eyes to grow accustomed to the dark. Even the flashlight resisted the stale air and profound blackness surrounding us. It faintly illuminated a bit of cloth here, the outline of a box there,. We didn't dare turn on an overhead light and didn't look for one. When they came home Nani and Yoko would walk the path between our apartment and the treasure house, and if they came home and saw light streaming through the hole in the wall they'd know someone was in there. We didn't know when they would return, but it was usually around this time on Sunday when they came back from wherever they went. We continued to stumble around in the dark.

We went up some bare wooden stairs to a kind of loft. Against the back wall, Sumi e scrolls, traditional Japanese ink brush paintings, were stacked on shelves like loaves of French bread in a bakery. There didn't appear to be any dust or decay, because there was so little opportunity. Even the poorest specimen of the hundreds of ink paintings stacked there would easily fetch my monthly wage. Those I cautiously unrolled showed astonishing brush work, old, and in mint condition. I turned away from the wall of Sumi e scrolls and saw a carved wooden chest standing alone. I unfastened the clasp and lifted the lid. Amielle held the light while I examined the contents. It was more of the same, but of an even

finer quality. Beside a shining Samurai sword lay a single scroll. I unlaced the ribbon and unrolled it under the beam of the flashlight. A black eagle perched haughtily on the fragment of a tree limb and stared directly at me. I was mesmerized by its power, its beauty. Silently it spoke to me through a thought in my mind. It said, "I'm yours."

I stared back a long time. If I could smuggle even half of these paintings out of the country and back to the US I could retire from wage slavery and be a real artist. Here was a treasure house of aesthetic excellence, and Nani had no interest in it—at least no aesthetic interest in it. There wasn't a single work of art on display anywhere in the estate. His idea of art was Kewpie dolls hung from radio knobs in a car. This great wealth of beauty was locked away for purely economic reasons. All over Japan artists had lived and died and struggled to survive, struggled to create a masterpiece for someone who only valued their existence as the compounding of wealth in a great, black box.

We went back the way we came in. Still no Gloria in the driveway. I lay on the futon in our bedroom while Amielle prepared our mackerel, white rice, and cucumbers. I stared at the ceiling and saw the black eagle piercing my mind's eye. I wanted to keep the eagle for myself. I could see it hung on a wall by the entry of a house I would someday own. I would look at it there as I was seeing it now. Just to look at it. To feel its presence and power. To follow the stroke of the brush, slowly, fully, taking in the fine lines left at the corners and at the completion of each movement of the master's brush. Each stroke without hesitation, without correction. Each stroke working together with every other stroke to make up the whole.

I decided I could leave all the others, but the black eagle was mine. All night the policeman of my mind argued with the criminal of my heart. I could take it now, hide it, no one would ever know. I wanted it. Mr. Yasutake, if he knew it existed, knew nothing of its value, its true value. I deserved it, the thief argued, for all the work I was doing for bare subsistence wages. The criminal was vociferous and persistent—but ultimately weaker than the policeman. By the time night had become morning, I saw in my mind's eye the painting hanging on a wall in the house of a thief, a daily reminder of beauty raped, not loved. My criminal self was disappointed and disgusted, but quiet.

A week or so later, the hole in the wall was repaired.

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Chapter Seven: The Girl in the Field

I was drinking too much shōchū. Blame it on the isolation, the culture shock, the feverish work load. Blame it on my fondness for its cold anesthetizing effects after entertaining the uncomprehending all day. I don't care. It was cheap. I could be rip roaring drunk for the price of a bottle of beer. Shōchū is made from fermented rice, barley, and sweet potatoes, fermented far beyond the niceties and sophistication of sake. Rumor had it that distillers rounded out the formula with sawdust. They swore they hadn't done that since World War Two, but you could never tell by the taste. It tasted like kerosene smells with a nasty burn, like cheap whiskey on an empty stomach. Amielle wouldn't touch the stuff, so I drank her share. I was gaining weight— shōchū carbohydrates.

I decided to do calisthenics. My resolution was faithfully followed for a couple of weeks until I strained a muscle in my lower back. I don't remember what I was doing, sit-ups maybe. It didn't bother me much that day, but it got worse the next. On the third day, I knew I was in trouble. On the fourth day, a Friday, I was getting dressed to teach in Shimonoseki when I bent down to tie my shoe. I had a spasm of pain that didn't go away. It just clamped me to the kitchen floor and kept me there.

Amielle had already left for a tea ceremony class she was taking to upgrade her visa from tourist to cultural education. Mr. Yasutake and Yoko were out of town somewhere. Dick came by and waited outside with his rubber-band-mobile. He was going to drive us to the city. I hollered for him to come inside. I was still lying on the floor, fully dressed except for one untied shoe. I couldn't move. The spasm continued without interruption while Dick dragged me into the bedroom to lie on the futon. He went to Shimonoseki without me.

Amielle taught my classes at the academy Friday and Saturday. Nani and Yoko came back Sunday night and reluctantly agreed to let Amielle continue substituting for me. They were suspicious, but didn't know what to do, didn't have a choice. I had medical coverage through the Japanese government, a national health plan. Everyone had complete coverage at minimal cost. Even though I was a *gaijin*, I was a taxpayer and, therefore, insured. The doctor gave me muscle relaxants and ordered three weeks bed rest.

I enjoyed my liberty, but I was bored. We didn't have a TV, radio, newspapers, books or magazines. We had no family or friends. Dick stayed away. Personal computers and the Internet had not been invented. Amielle was doing my job and gone most of the time. Now she had the cooking and housework on top of it. I amused myself with some drawing materials she picked up in town. I thought about my past and future while I sketched various fantasies that came to mind. I had time to wonder how I was ever going to be an artist. When would I have the time to create? I didn't mean then and there flat on my back, knees up, but always.

I was 38 years old and confronting the usual problem—work all day to survive, then be an artist with whatever energy was left at night. I never had the time, space, or storage facilities for sculpture. I'd

never learned how to paint, never wanted to. I always looked for jobs that were conducive to doing art work in my spare time, and I always failed. I had to find an art form I could do under any circumstances, in any living condition, in a medium I could afford even in Nishikiwa. It had to be done quickly, or at least in brief segments, at any time of night or day. It had to be something I knew how to do or could teach myself. I'd been in school too long already. No more. It had to be light and readily transportable. I usually lived in small apartments, and rarely lived anywhere for more than a year or two.

Then I started to think about the art world. How was I ever going to get my work exhibited? The attempts I had made to show my work had come to nothing. I was at an age when a *real* artist was having retrospectives, not introductions to his work. I wondered what I had to do to get recognition in that strange world. I could see that it was going to be much harder and take much longer than I imagined it would ten years earlier. Then I began to wonder if I really wanted to be an artist anymore. Did I really want to be a citizen of that inane and carrion-feeding reality euphemistically referred to as the art world?

Did I really want to be one of the chosen ones, the one in ten thousand, the one artist plucked from the longing crowd, draped in the aura of genius and can-do-no-wrong greatness, puffed up by the fluffy words of the art dealer cum Madison Avenue hypesters leading their parade of sycophants, sissies, dabblers droolers, and paparazzi with those words, those wonderful words of art alchemy transforming piles of dog shit into mountains of aesthetic profundity? Did I really want to be in that waiting crowd begging, brown nosing, pissing my pants to be discovered, to be invested in, to be promoted like the new fall line-up of cars, like the new and improved laundry detergent, like the hottest new madman since poor Vincent, remember poor Vincent van Gogh?

And then I had a dream.

* *

Just before morning, in the last darkness of night, I saw a girl standing alone at the edge of a field. She was eleven or twelve, on the threshold of puberty. Her back was to me. She had long hair and wore a plain dress that came down to her ankles. As I came closer out of curiosity, she raised her arms. From her fingertips there emanated lines, black lines randomly sweeping across a soft gray sky of early morning light. As I drew closer, I could see her arms moving with effortless grace and ease. The whole effect was amazing and tranquilizing. When I came even closer, I felt a new calm and thought a new thought I had never known.

I awoke and tried to put it into words. The best my waking mind could offer was some banality like, "Everything will be OK. Everything will come together in time. Let it evolve naturally as it will." Empty words, easily forgotten but for a luxurious calm that remained for an hour or two and returned whenever I remembered the dream that day.

Normally, I didn't remember my dreams, and I preferred it that way. I ignored all dreams except those that by their power and vividness had the ability to impose themselves upon my wakefulness. That

was rare for me. I'd met people who looked forward to each day to translate their nightly fantasies. Of course they could hardly wait to tell all and sundry the interpretation, the meaning and direction it gave their lives. In those days, I would have been more impressed if they got drunk and took instructions from a cat. But this dream, this girl in the field, I never forgot.

For weeks I'd been working on an idea, a way to creatively satisfy all the improbable necessities of my fragmented life. I remembered something my Uncle Don Wilson said years before about the kind of meditative trance artists experience, that when they were deep in the mist of creative expression their EKG brain waves resembled the same pattern as experienced mediators in deep meditation. I knew it was true because I had experienced that altered awareness numerous times while carving stone.

I wanted to combine that idea: artistic creation and meditation. I'd completed the preliminary work—the cognitive rationalizations, design details, and assembly of materials—and had set aside a week of waiting before I began. It was during this waiting or gestation period that I had that dream—one of the most vivid and memorable dreams of my life. I'd scheduled myself to begin the experiment in three days. And the focus of my life was begun.

* *

It was late October. The days were shorter; the nights were long. Amielle was gone. I set my clock to awaken me every morning before six to hear the village Buddhist temple bell. At the gonging of the bell I arose. It was cold. I wore only my t-shirt and underwear. It was the coldest winter the natives could remember. I slid back the shoji and entered the kitchen. I only needed a little clay, water pot and shawl. The other utensils were laid out near the futon the night before. Every step was measured. The water pot was always carried on a single tissue in my right hand. My right foot always returned to touch the tatami first. My left hand always closed the shoji behind me. I always knelt with my right knee before I sat in the half-lotus position to make the ink. My ink stick, brush, and stone were cheap, school children quality, but I handled them with grace and care. Everything I touched I touched the same way. Nothing was left to carelessness or chance. It was ceremony; it was ritual; even the brush stroke was prescribed. It was a circle, a single circle. Nothing more. Nothing less.

“Just follow your instincts,” Amielle had said.

“But it doesn't make any sense,” I answered.

“It's a circle. Nothing. That's what I want to do. That's *all* I want to do.”

“Well, then, just do it.” she said.

I asked my students in several classes what the Japanese word for circle was, and they told me that the word for circle and nothing were the same “wa.” I decided then that I would call my circle, “Perfect wa.” I would create the perfect circle, the Perfect wa. It was nothing. For a long time I had suspected there were two kinds of nothing: the nothing we know and the nothing we don't know. Maybe it was God, and maybe God was nothing.

Amielle saved every penny she earned from a stranger who had come to our door. He was a local high school English teacher who wanted to practice conversational English before going to an English

teacher's conference in Tokyo. I thought he wanted to make arrangements with Mr. Yasutake, but he insisted we keep it quiet. He would pay us directly. The deal was made.

In a month she saved enough to purchase a one-way ticket on the Shinkansen to Tokyo. I wrote a letter to a school I used to work for that had living accommodations. Did they have an opening for Amielle at their school? She was a young American. She had experience teaching English. And, she was blond. "Yes," my old boss said, and she left that week.

Amielle was gone. The persimmons were scarlet. It was a cold winter. I ate white rice, cucumbers, and the cheapest fish I could find, mackerel. It's all I could afford. I drank shōchū. I taught all day and into the night. I practiced the Perfect wa ritual every morning at six when the Buddhist temple bell tolled. I kept a journal. On Sunday, I walked to the Inland Sea, past the Shinto shrine, past the village graveyard, past the boats in the harbor to the jetty where I stood alone looking eastward into a blue gray horizon.

The First Monastery of One was begun.

* * * *

Chapter Eight: Perfect wa

Nishikiwa Journal of November 1983:

Ink Brush Metaesthetics. I am purposely and exclusively pursuing an awareness of the nature of existence based upon the personal observation that the essence of creativity is something more than a rational process. I am deliberately attempting to minimize the rational process and encourage the development of the other process, hereinafter referred to as intuitive awareness. Intuitive awareness of what? The nature of existence, also known as the phenomenon of existence.

Consciousness. Six years ago this autumn, it came to me quite unexpectedly while I was making spaghetti sauce in my apartment at the officer's quarters outside Fort Benning, Georgia, that if nature can be accurately relied upon to provide us with a model of reality as it really is, then I could construct a simple but reasonable argument for the existence of a consciously intelligent deity. That is, the Whole is greater than the sum of its parts. If this axiom is acceptable, then it can be applied to all nature as a truth that the whole *must* be greater than one of the parts, human consciousness, for example.

I am a man of modest intellectual means, which is one of the reasons I became a sculptor instead of a philosopher. I am unsure of my logic and reasoning. I am even unsure of the nature of my own consciousness and feel wholly inadequate to comprehend a consciousness greater than my own. If that which is greater than human consciousness is something other than consciousness, what is it? Because I cannot refute the axiom, I'll test it experimentally. Thus, I am setting off to discover something I don't know exists, and if it does what its properties are? I have one clue: if it exists, it is something greater than my consciousness.

A work of art has a lot of reasons for the form it takes. If you eliminate all reasons except one, what form does it take? Essence. What form does a work of art take if its only reason for existence is to discover essence? The essence of creation. Is the essence of one creation the essence of all creation? Is the essence of all creation the phenomenon of existence? Something exists. It was brought into three-dimensional reality. It became a thing. It was created by rearranging other things to make a new thing.

Senses. The rational mind is skeptical of the sensory apparatus as a reliable yardstick for measuring and analyzing reality. The meditating guru denies the senses in order to discover and explore another reality altogether. Both may be correct in their respective approaches to different realities. The senses appear to be inaccurate in one case and a barrier to be transcended in another. For aesthetic appreciation, however, they are indispensable. Or are they? It is reasonable to maintain that according to human consciousness in order for the phenomenon of sound to occur there must be an action (A) producing a motion (B) received by an apparatus that transforms and consumes a portion of it, and both actions are necessary to have sound (C). $A+B=C$.

If appearances are what they appear to be, we must have our senses to have art. The senses do not reason; the rational mind does. The senses transmit an impression. The rational mind learns to give that impression a name, then analyze it with increasing complexity born of experience. Before we learned a language with which to name and analyze, then we must have existed in a state of sensory awareness in which we experienced the sound of a bird, motorcycle, people talking, belching, and so on without passing judgment. Once we acquired the social skills that enabled us to categorize an impression as good, bad, pleasant, unpleasant, irrelevant, dangerous, disgusting, or sublime we lost contact with the essence of the senses, pure awareness.

Meta.es.thet.ics (meta-esthet-iks) n. That branch of aesthetics involved with an awareness of the nature of existence as revealed in an act of creation.

1. I don't have any special gifts or divine powers giving me preferential access to an awareness of the nature of existence.
2. I'm looking for an awareness of the nature of existence with an aesthetic act of creation as evidence of such an awareness.
3. I don't know if it's possible. If it is possible, I have no fore-ordination of how it may manifest itself.
4. The knowledge I have of the nature of existence is self consciousness and a sensory and emotive awareness of physical existence.
5. A careful, non-verbal examination of the sensory awareness of physical existence is the starting point of my study.
6. The ink brush drawing/painting, Nishikiwa Form, was conceived as a method of minimizing the sensory distractions of decision making and internal chatter in the language thinking faculty. It was designed to maximize efficiency and simplicity without ignoring balance and gracefulness.

Metaesthetics is a radical transformation of the visual art. It inextricably joins another great institution of irrelevance, religion, in seeking the source of such activities. Metaesthetics attempts to strip away all the verbiage, cant, and dogma surrounding and obscuring the Mystery. It is an attempt to come face-to-face with the Phenomenon of Existence.

The Ritual

After countless hours of thinking about what I was going to do and what it meant, I had to design the actual doing of it. Not having a religious background in the use of action as ritual I could only conceive of it as a kind of tea ceremony where the simplest act of making tea is surrounding by exact, precise movement. But I wasn't done thinking. Here again are quotes from my journal of that time.

Every item and element, procedure and practice is beginning with a reason, a meaning, and/or symbol. What is the purpose of having any form? Why should the actual work be surrounded by ceremony? When an organist learns to play a certain musical passage he must think about where each finger goes and in what sequence. He must think about how hard he must strike the keys singly or in combination with other keys. He must consider the foot pedals—which to push when, where, what

sequence. He also pushes and pulls out the stops with the same consideration. While he is learning the passage, his mind is teaching his body a certain motion. Once it is learned, the mind rests and the body acts.

Each musical passage played yields a predictable result varied only by the sensitivity of the individual performer. This is the desired purpose of the Nishikiwa Form; to design a reproducible result, an intuitive understanding of the nature of existence. The form is designed to create a reproducible result within the performer. What happens on the paper is another matter.

It's mid-November now. After a number of tries there was finally an outline of the exact ritual or ceremony (I could never decide which). It got more complicated with practice, but this was the beginning. Again, I'm quoting directly from my journal.

18 NOV 83:

1. When I first get up I'll put the alarm clock in the kitchen. It's a mildly distracting noise.
2. I enter the room the first time with the ink stick, water pot and tissue in my left hand leaving my right hand free to open and close the shoji. I enter the room the last time with the ink stone and brushes in my right hand leaving my left hand free to open and close the shoji.
3. My knees are aligned with the right edge of the paper as it rests on the table when I first kneel down.
4. I turn over yesterday's brush work with my left hand fingers placed approximately in the center at the top of the page. This allows me to turn one page instead of two or three as is the usual case when done at the right side. I do the same for placing the rice paper protection under the paper to be stroked: left fingers at top middle turning right fingers pulling rice paper to the right, then under.
5. Ink stick left hand, ink stone right hand, two positions left, set down simultaneously. Then, flowers left hand, brushes right, two positions left, set down flowers, one position right, set down brushes. Cross-legged seating movement.
6. Casually focus on the movement of the hand rubbing the ink stick on the stone. Think about a relaxed state of awareness, the essence of sensory pleasure—and pain.
7. The first half of meditation will be with eyes closed. The second half will be with eyes opened just enough to dimly perceive the objects before me. This will allow a gradual return of the visual sense needed to do the brush stroke

28 NOV 83: Hearing Sound. The first clear indication I have of a direction to follow has become apparent the past few days. During the Half Lotus I've improved my ability to disengage the language faculty and concentrate on sensory awareness . The more adept I become at this practice the more readily I'm able to discern a kind of high vibration sound in my ears. It appears to be a sound within my own head and not one emanating from without. My only guess at the moment is that I'm hearing my hearing apparatus.

Although it's not a musical sound it does have a kind of pitch which I can find and join by mentally sliding up a scale of notes until I reach a note that appears to be at the same level. I haven't determined if the pitch is constant from day to day or if it changes with a change in internal and/or

external factors. The sound does have a quality of loudness or softness that appears to be directly related to my ability to ignore other distractions and focus language-free on it. Having nothing better to do I'll focus my awareness on this sound for awhile to see if I can learn something. This morning I was able to hear this sound almost from the moment I went into Half Lotus until I finished the work

After repeated trials and errors over weeks, by early December I was able to find the ritual that had meaning for me and could be repeated exactly every time, every day. That was "day one." The temperature in the room averaged 4-5° C, or about 40° F. By January that dropped to an average of 1° C or 33° F. My only protection from the cold was a thin, synthetic/cotton blended sweatsuit and a wool scarf.

The Log: Day One

05 DEC 83: The form is complete. The initial direction is clear. The destination and results are not clear. I often wonder if this is some kind of provincial silliness from which I'll recover as soon as I quit this period of isolation. This is the greatest, most intense period of isolation and alienation in my life....I have progressively become more estranged from society than I could have imagined when I left home at the age of 18. Am I still sane? I wonder. . . .

The log went on like this, day after day, but I will spare the reader the tedium of the two months of log entries by summarizing the findings made through the evolution of my practice that was set and clear by 01 FEB 84. Here is the entry for that day.

01 FEB 84: The Aura Hypothesis discovered today, but I don't believe it without further evidence. Unhappily, it's a 1960s Flower Child phenomenon that lends itself to a lot of "Oh, wow, out of sight, man!" mushiness. I'll pursue it because what I observed today demands further investigation.

The following is an outline of what I've experienced during my metaesthetics practice:

1. The Hearing Sound
2. Breathing Rhythm
3. Detachment of Simultaneous Observation (DoSO)
4. Aura Hypothesis

I don't really understand all this yet, but the above outline appears to represent a kind of progress. First, I discovered that as I disengaged the language/decision-making faculties by meditation and following a prescribed form, respectively, I was able to hear a buzz or humming sound in my ears. I've discovered that the more successfully I've been able to disengage these faculties, the more successful I've been able to hear and concentrate on the Hearing Sound.

After that, I discovered that with rhythmical breathing (i.e., steady, measured breaths inhaled and exhaled) the experience became multidimensional. The Hearing Sound was a flat monotone intertwined with an ebbing and flowing breathing cycle. With my concentration fixed on this feeling/hearing pattern I was able to slip into a level of detached awareness. At this level, what I call

Level 2, I'm perfectly aware of sensory phenomena (cold, noise, even occasional internal chatter), but have no visceral reaction other than a mild curiosity or interest.

With my eyes open in the second stage of meditation, I noticed the detachment carried over into my visual awareness of the objects before me, including my own body as part of the display. This ability to simultaneously observe separate elements in one field of vision—not giving any one item greater weight or consideration than another, but perceiving each and all, I call the Detachment of Simultaneous Observation.

At this point, after having achieved such a condition I attempt to maintain it as best I can while I take the brush and fill it with ink in the ink stone. This morning, as usual I held my brush poised for a moment to regain the DoSO when I decided to change the habit I'd slipped into of attempting to make a perfect circle beginning at about 7 or 8 o'clock and working my way around counter-clockwise to completion. I decided once again to simply make some kind of circle as a detached observer paying no more interest to the starting point, direction or shape of the circle—nor to the circle itself—than to anything else before me.

When I finished and put my brush away, then I gave the circle my exclusive attention. At this, I observed the most extraordinary aura or auras, flaming, flashing, billowing out this way and that—all with a colorless light ranging from a soft to hard intensity or concentration. The aura was the most impressive I'd ever seen. The circle itself was rather bedraggled and misshapen, but the aura was most impressive.

What, then, is the Aura Hypothesis? I'm not sure. There appears to be a relationship between my development in the first three conditions to the result in the fourth. That is, the more I'm able to be #3, a detached and simultaneous observer, the more luminous and alive the radiation emanating from the circle. I call it the Aura Hypothesis, because I don't know that it's a fact, and I'm not even sure what it means. All I know is that those were the conditions, and the aura display I saw was the result.

Finally:

06 FEB 84: 3 degrees C @ 7:10 AM: Today, despite a mild hangover, or because of it, the first exhibition quality circle was produced—complete with aura. An unusual thing occurred. I forgot about the DoSO and began focusing my attention on the blank, white paper as I had the brush poised to strike. I just sat there, looking at it with my eyes half out of focus. I don't think what happened next is magical or mystical, but it is noteworthy just the same. As I continued to look at the paper it gradually turned a charcoal gray, except for a thin band of light along the length of the bottom edge, the edge nearest me. How the eyes manage to do something like that I don't know. It didn't seem peculiar at the time, only interesting.

At the moment before the page turned black (if in fact it would have), I made the stroke. Without premeditation, I started at about 4 o'clock and worked clockwise to about 5 o'clock without any consideration for the appearance of the thing. At 5 o'clock, I consciously looked at what I was doing so as to tie the ends together and immediately realized what I had done. By that time, the circle was

closed—my hand having continued on its course undisturbed by my surprise. I put the brush away and sat back to watch a lovely, not magnificent, but thoroughly pleasant display of aura luminescence.

Describing Perfect wa

Following an intuitive obsession to immerse myself in ritual, I created an image of no-thing as the only conceivable perfection. It is only a circle, a zero, nothing, the One that is not a number, the Logos, and the Whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.



Chapter Nine: A 40-Year-Old Busboy

The Nishikiwa meditation ritual and form, “Perfect wa,” was continued for two more weeks, then stopped when I quit Ube English Academy and returned to Tokyo. Nani had come to me and explained as best he could that he had added new businesses with even more hours of teaching. More work, same pay. That weekend while Yoko and he were gone I called Mrs. Harris in Tokyo and explained the situation—the long hours 6-days a week with hardly more than slave wages. I told her exactly what was going on and why I was leaving. I was on the bullet train for Tokyo the next day.

Amielle and I continued free-lance teaching in the city for six months and were able to save enough money to leave the country. I would have immediately returned to the metaesthetics practice, but my living arrangement was in a dormitory room at English Village that was filled to capacity with bunk beds positioned no more than shoulder-width apart. I went from extreme isolation to extreme togetherness. In August of 1984, Amielle and I discussed leaving Tokyo. I wasn't ready to go back to working as a waiter in Portland, so I suggested we move to Hawaii.

“People don't just move to Hawaii,” Amielle said.

“Why not? We're US citizens, we can live wherever we want to,” I said.

“How will we make a living?”

“Who cares? If we can't get jobs we'll just move to an outer island and fish and pick fruit.”

Every fool's fantasy about Hawaii.

Once again we packed everything we owned into two small backpacks and moved to Honolulu. After several very scary weeks of job hunting and money quickly disappearing I got a job as a telephone caller for Louis, Singer, Ankersmit, and Soon, a Honolulu market research company.

“Hello. This is Wilson Jones calling from Louis, Singer, Ankersmit, and Soon. I would like to ask your opinion about _____.” We were encouraged to use a pseudonym and all I could think of was the names of my two grandfathers, Al Wilson and Orville Jones.

My workday started at 5 PM, working the phones in my cubicle in an office building in downtown Honolulu. Amielle went to work in a succession of restaurants in Waikiki and we were able to move out of our weekly-rate motel to a small studio apartment two blocks from Waikiki Beach. We furnished it with discarded furniture we found on early morning searches through dumpsters. I adopted the discipline of going to the beach every day, even in bad weather. I had the time and space to return to Perfect wa, but my focus turned to philosophy, and our studio apartment lanai became my study.

A couple of months before my fortieth birthday I decided I needed to give myself a financial promotion. The market research company liked my work, but I was still making minimum wage, and I knew I could make minimum wage plus tips if I could get a restaurant job. I was only able to find a job

as a busboy, but it was at the Outrigger Canoe Club, within walking distance of our apartment, and I took it. It was the first time in my life I actually had an opportunity to observe the rich and famous, but only while they were eating. The food was good, and the money was good, but I became restless and knew that with seven years of college and two degrees there had to be something more I could be doing with my life. I didn't know what it was, but I knew it wasn't going to be in Hawaii.

We moved to San Diego in late 1985. There was really only one reason I chose and sold Amielle on the move to San Diego instead of Portland. Sunshine. After trying for many years to ignore the many months of cold, wet, and cloudy weather, I'd had enough. My parents were living in San Bernadino County, east of LA and about 100 miles away from our goal, but that was no longer a primary reason. They never lived anywhere long due to my mother's wanderlust that kept her moving every year or two. Sure enough they moved to northern California a year after we arrived. Father was still alive but had no say in anything anymore.

On Thanksgiving Day of 1986, Amielle and I got married. We were together five years, and I think we both wanted that much time to decide on making our relationship more official. She was finishing her undergraduate degree at San Diego State University in Telecommunications and Film while working part time for KPBS, the public television station in San Diego.

I got a job as a display designer for the Broadway department store in Escondido. After a year I moved up to Nordstrom's in downtown Horton Plaza. We had 10 windows to design and install in addition to the interior displays. There were three of us in the display department in the basement of the Nordstrom store. Two women and myself. The manager was a serious cocaine addict, according to her closest friend, and her actions were consistent with that craving. We often disagreed, but by that time I had made a vow with myself. I would agree with the boss on everything and not be my usual problem employee. For too many years I had let my disagreements with the boss darkly color my attitude.

It was an important vow, and it kept me employed, but I went to work every morning consciously, deliberately focusing on putting one foot in front of the other from the moment I exited my parked car until I reached the time clock. The first problem was our aesthetic differences. I was and have always been inclined toward a minimalist approach to almost everything: images—too much clutter; letters—too many words. She was the opposite. She thought we should throw everything we could find into the windows. I constantly quoted the study Nordstrom did showing people who looked at a display window looked at it for less than 5 seconds. With so little time to make a statement I thought it should be bold and definite. Hit hard and fast. She insisted that was just laziness.

Nordstrom, the company, agreed with me. The head of their display division came down and said exactly what I had been saying for more than a year. It made no difference, absolutely none. We continued to fill the windows to the brim her way, and no more argument from me. But that was not the biggest problem. In fact if it were not for the really big problem I may not have mentioned my display design days at all. But what happened there affected me profoundly for many years to come. The big problem was the black carpeting on the floor and walls of the display design windows. They got dirty from all the wear and tear of setting up displays and tearing them down.

So, how do you keep them crisp and black? Cheap, black, fast-dry spray paint. Billowing clouds and mists of aliphatic hydrocarbons, ketones, and toluene in an unventilated room in summertime temperatures in excess of 100° F. It didn't bother her, of course, because she was never in there doing that kind of work. I did the donkey work, made the props, installed them, and tore everything down. She draped the fashions and accessories onto the manikins once everything was ready. It didn't bother her, but it did bother the Regional Manager when she saw my working conditions. I was there when she told the manager emphatically that this practice with the black spray paint had to stop immediately. It didn't stop.

I got serious arrhythmia. Every time I had to do this work breathing the spray paint fumes my heart went crazy. But I had taken a vow, remember? The Regional Manager liked me and my work, my attitude, and one day she called me into her office and told me there was an opening for the display manager of a store in another city, an LA suburb. She said that the job was mine if I wanted it. I did want it, but I couldn't take it. Amielle was now a producer for KGTV, San Diego's ABC affiliate, and she made a lot more money than I did. We couldn't move. I thanked the Regional Manager, then stayed on —until I got an idea for self-employment, one of the many dumb ideas I've had, but it gave me an excuse for quitting.

It was called “Biographies.” I thought I could join Amielle's world, sort of, and film people's life stories as a family heirloom for their descendants. The story of your life as told to me on film. I bought the camera and lighting equipment, registered the name of the company. I even got a write up in a local paper of my new business. Then I stopped. I didn't know how to be a self-promoter. I didn't have the stomach for it. I couldn't go out and hustle. Cold-calling always made me cringe. Sure I could talk to people and sound somewhat intelligent, but after being rejected at several rest homes and trying day after day to find someone to talk to I didn't know what to do.

I was saved by Amielle. She never got anything but love from every job and every boss she ever had. KGTV was no exception. In fact, not only was she doing her usual outstanding work, this time as the executive producer of the show, *Inside San Diego*, a regional exploration of cultural events and happenings, she had made friends with advertising account executives for the station. They had the contacts but sometimes they didn't have time or the confidence to write the advertising copy. I made a speed-reading dash through books on the art of writing advertising copy at the library of San Diego State University, and I became an overnight expert.

The work wasn't steady, and it paid well but infrequently, and I had the same problem becoming a boutique advertising agency that I had with selling the idea of *Biographies*. Call reluctance. Selling myself. I could get just enough work through Amielle's contacts at KGTV to make me feel like I was actually working for a living, but not enough to pay the bills. Fortunately, she was good at that. Finally, one company liked me well enough to keep me busy.

Nurseryland was the largest chain of nursery stores in Southern California and Arizona. The Vice President of this region liked my work, my copy. He brought me in for consultation on TV, then print advertising for the *Union Tribune*, then radio adverts. They were my favorite. 60 seconds to tell a

story. I continued to study advertising copy on my own, and I continued to improve, but the weather was against me.

After seven years of drought, Nurseryland was in trouble. People were not planting beautiful home gardens. Stores were beginning to close. One week after the Vice president and I mapped out our sales campaign for the year with more earnings than I had seen in years, a real income, he got the ax. He got his with a golden parachute. I just got the ax. A quick phone call from their home office in Texas did it.

Unemployed again.

* * * *

Chapter 10: Impulse

During all these years of struggle to find my place in the world of employment I hadn't abandoned all hope of enlightenment. When Amielle and I moved from Honolulu to San Diego, we spent a few months living in a prefab, aluminum tool shed in my parent's back yard in San Bernadino County. Amielle got a job at a deli and I tried to get a job at a Volkswagen dealership selling cars, I thought they would hire anybody, but the Manager took it upon himself to tell me he wasn't going to hire me because he thought I didn't have a clue about what I was doing with my life. He told me in no uncertain terms that I really needed to get my shit together, and that was that.

It was during this period when I learned the magic of fixing a smile on my face to combat serious depression. I was driving on some street feeling sorry for myself when for some unknown reason I looked over at the person in the car next to me as we stopped at a stoplight, and for some unknown reason she smiled at me. I automatically smiled back as anyone would as a courtesy, and I suddenly felt better than I had all day. So, I practiced it while driving home to our prefab, aluminum tool shed, and it worked. I later found that we really do have the ability to fool our cranky selves by smiling no matter how bad we feel. Of course, when we're feeling really bad we seldom remember to fix a silly grin on our faces, and even if we remember the antidote it may be just one more discipline we can't manage.

When we got away from the tool shed in San Bernadino, Amielle and I found a decent two bedroom apartment in La Mesa on the eastern border of San Diego. With so little furniture, the second bedroom remained empty a long time and became my sacred space. Once again, I had the space and motivation to return to meditation, but this time I wanted to go in another direction: I would attempt to follow the random brush strokes of the Pubescent Girl Dream. Instead of a clearly defined form, the circle of Perfect wa, I experimented with an *undefined* form, the indeterminate, random brush strokes, conceived without thought and on impulse. I called it, "Impulse."

Now that I had two forms of brush stroke drawings arising from meditation, Perfect wa and Impulse, I needed a name for this kind of work. I chose "Alpha Drawings," in that they would represent the first and primary modes of aesthetic creation. In Nishikiwa my access to good drawing paper was severely limited to a 9"X 12" sketch pad, I invested in 22"X 30" professional paper.

The first 10 or more times I made an Impulse drawing that I felt was worth keeping I was sure it was just coincidence or luck, and I doubted it would happen again. I was reminded of an old argument for blind evolution that given enough time a room full of monkeys with typewriters could produce the complete works of Shakespeare. It wasn't until the Impulse drawing of 13 NOV 88 that I finally had any confidence in this new form. And with these two forms, Perfect wa and Impulse, the Alpha Drawings, the foundation of my "metaesthetics" odyssey was complete.

Regarding Beauty

As Bertrand Russell said, “The vision of beauty is possible only to the unfettered contemplation, to thoughts not weighed by the load of eager expectations.” Our sensory apparatus operates passively in providing information to the mind about the environment of the self and not the self. The knowledge we receive about the external environment is organized actively by the reasoning faculty, the only faculty of the human organism that has both awareness of the data provided by the other faculties as well as an awareness of its own self. Rules of thought are an attempt to organize our familiar world of sensory perception. We make ideas from things; we make things from ideas.

As things, Perfect wa and Impulse are only water and charcoal soot scribbled on paper with the hair of a horse or other animal affixed to a bamboo stick, the brush. To view such things elicits more than mere recognition of component parts; the beholder is aroused by feeling, the feeling of beauty. Beauty may take the form of quiet serenity, magnificent bravery, or the elegance of a scientific theory. Even Perfect wa, a design so elementary, so childish, has many moods of feeling. Yes, it is a circle, a zero, a thing, but it is also a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The Presentation, a Performance. Sensory impressions from an External Source. Ritual and environment created to maximize focus. Making ink. Aesthetic arrangement of immediate working space combined with time of day for silent meditation and ceremony, enhancing the potential to achieve a particular alpha state of consciousness. Tactile sensation of brush along with the kinesthesia of movement, sensory impressions from all external sources carefully planned, arranged, and ritualized to stimulate the nervous system in a reliably predictable and consistent manner.

Sign, Significate, and Actual Entity. The sign is the wave lengths of light detected by the sensory apparatus of vision emanating from whatever source, the actual entity. The significate is the meaning the mind gives to the light wave impression. The actual entity is the actual physical object.

Ritual and Ceremony. There is power in ritual and ceremony. From the beginning, the ritualized ceremony was designed to replicate the extraordinary awe and mystery I felt at my first Japanese tea ceremony. As in the tea ceremony, every movement of the ceremony is choreographed in exacting detail; every implement and material used is laid out and handled the same way; even the clothes I wear are the same—and they are only worn during this ceremony.

We now understand something of the neurobiology of such ritualized activity. With the publication of neuroscientist Andrew Newberg's work, *Why God Won't Go Away* (Ballantine Books, 2001) much of what I began in 1983 finally makes sense. As one meditates, neural reverberations intensify until regulatory mechanisms dampen down neural information producing a calming effect. The increased activity of the parietal lobe blurring the line separating self from others. In the most extreme cases, the line of separation is completely eliminated and a felling of oneness with the universe, a cosmic unity, is experienced.

Just as thoughts are not manufactured by the brain but are apprehended by the brain; and just as musical notation is not music but a description of music; so too are the brush strokes of these

drawings not the creation of beauty but merely an invitation to the beauty that exists in the mind of existence.

Describing Impulse. Following the Second Dream, I create the indeterminate at the threshold of consciousness. The reasoning mind recoils at uncertainty as it yearns for refuge in ideas and images sure and absolute. Impulse is the very image of uncertainty, incarnations of the indeterminate demanding that the viewer see with the silent self, the intuitive mind. Embracing the indeterminate requires courage and openness and an expansion of what it is to feel.

The Ceremony

On the eve before the chosen day, the room is made in readiness. Next morning, just before dawn when the world is cool and dark, I arise. Every step, every movement is always the same choreographed long ago. The ink is made by hand with water and ink stick rubbing on stone. All is set aside as meditation deepens and turns into the Alpha State of awareness, where reason is no longer restless and the breath and pulse quiet down. This place of euphoric silence. Held. Held. Slowly turning in the well of black, the brush emerges and pauses aloft. Held. Held. Then without warning or thought, it plunges onto paper. For a few seconds, creation and ceremony are one.

The Drawings

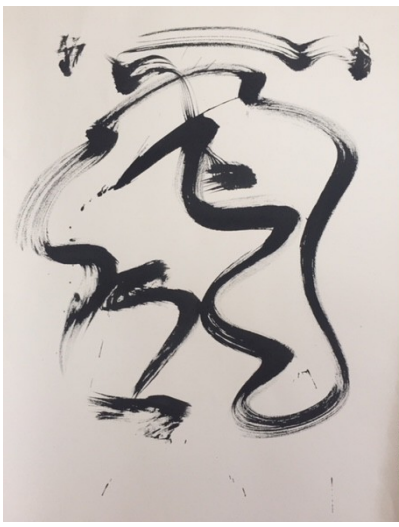
When I quit all artistic effort for philosophy I had hundreds of drawing that were weighing heavily on my consciousness and holding me back from getting on with my life. After numerous futile and embarrassing efforts knocking on the doors of the art world, I had given up trying to show them. It became clear to me that to continue in this direction was martyrdom. Rejection and indifference marked all of my efforts, and eventually I lost all interest in the world that had no interest in me. To continue begging to be seen seemed ridiculous. I destroyed all but a handful, the most representative and favorite of what I had done.

* *

Nine Impulse Drawings



07/10/88



07/17/88



07/31/88



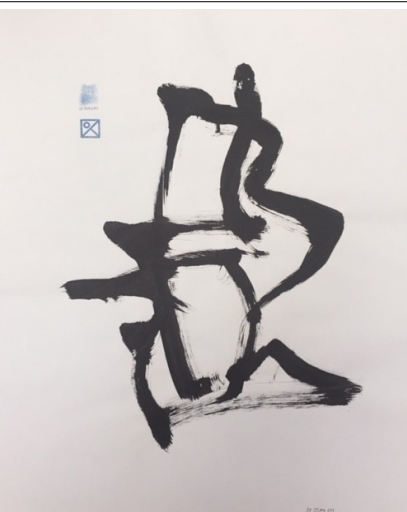
02/06/94



03/13/94



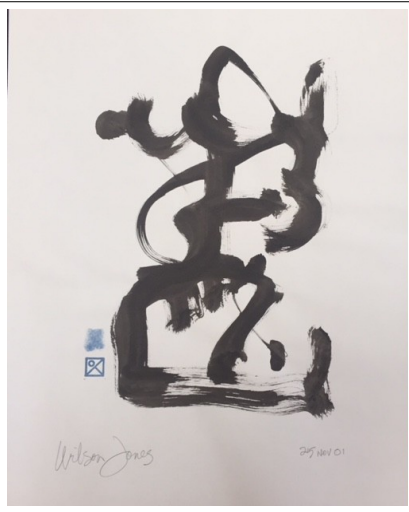
09/11/94



06/17/01



07/08/01



11/24/01

Part Three: Enlightenment



*Author's Sacred Space on the day of the first Great Insight,
16 JUN 03, La Mesa, California*

Chapter 11: Dark Mantra

In January of 1993 I was fired by Nurseryland. It was done with a phone call from the Texas corporate office. “We will no longer be needing your services as a copywriter for Nurseryland..” The phone call came exactly one week after the Vice President and I spent several hours mapping out the new year's campaign in TV, print, and radio ads. The radio campaign alone would have paid more than I had earned all the previous year. It was almost a decent income, but now I was unemployed again.

A few days after I was fired, the thought occurred to me that the only thing I was really good at was failure. Before long, that thought became a kind of dark mantra—*the only thing I'm good at is failure*. Everything I could remember about employment from the time I left North American Aviation at the age of 22 until the present day confirmed it. One failure after another, and I became haunted by my new mantra: *the only thing I'm good at is failure*. I was 47, almost 48, and 48 is almost 50. This is serious.

Desperate times call for desperate measures. Amielle had a friend of a friend who was an astrologer. This was not a bored and loopy housewife, but a local college teacher who looked and sounded quite sane. She did a reading and told me I was ideally suited to screenwriting. I thought it was probably nonsense, but I signed up for a night school screenwriting class, two classes, at the University of California, and discovered that I and every unemployed Humanities major in America was ideally suited to becoming screenwriters. I finished my classes and became officially unemployed. Time to look for a real job. Then I saw the televangelist.

I was drinking heavily. It started with wine, then moved on to the four major food groups—as one wiseacre put it—gin, tequila, whiskey, and vodka. I didn't usually drink a whole bottle every day. I paced myself, sort of. But then I got tired of variety and settled on vodka. I kept it chilled in the freezer and took a slug, or two or three, whenever I needed them. Sometimes I started before breakfast, sometimes before lunch, sometimes before dinner—depending on how disciplined I was that day. But one night, when I was still sober enough to watch TV, as I flipped through the channels I stopped to watch a televangelist, a Christian presumably, but I quickly noticed this man wasn't preaching about Jesus. Everything he said sounded like what I remembered of Stoic philosophy.

I had been interested in Stoic philosophy, on and off, since I was a 19-year-old Private in the Army. I first discovered the Stoics when I signed up for the Book of the Month Club. This organization sold books in full-page magazine ads by subscription, beginning with three books the subscriber could buy for only a dollar each. After the promotional offer you had to buy a book a month, but the fine print said you could opt out of that and still keep your subscription if you bought a book a year. I read the blurb on the *Discourses of Epictetus*. As the product of a parochial elementary and secondary education I had never heard of Epictetus or the Stoics, and I didn't know anyone who had. But, I liked the idea of a Roman slave becoming a famous philosopher, and I spent the dollar.

I got the book, *The Discourses*, liked it, read it entirely, once, then again a few years later. As the years went by many concepts from the book stayed with me. I didn't look into Stoicism any further, I just read passages of Epictetus at random when I needed to. One time, when I was in graduate school, I went through the whole book and wrote down every passage that I found useful. That way I wouldn't have to read stuff that didn't interest me; just the best of Epictetus, ready whenever I needed it. Nearly 30 years after I first discovered Epictetus I really needed him again, but this time he came in the form of a televangelist.

"This isn't Christianity, this is Stoic philosophy!" I said out loud to myself. I listened for awhile, long enough to marveled at it, then went back to channel surfing. On impulse I went back to hear some more, but I couldn't find him. I couldn't find the station; he was gone. I turned off the TV and decided I needed to study Stoic philosophy, really for the first time.

At around the same time another event happened that changed my life. One evening, when I went to the laundry room of our apartment complex I ran into another tenant, a young black man, folding his clothes. I'd seen him around, but we hadn't met. I introduced myself:

"Hi, I'm Erik. What's your name?"

"Gillis," he said, "As in *Dobie Gillis*. That's how you can remember it." He was referring to an American sitcom that hadn't aired since 1963, the end of the beatnik era. He didn't seem old enough to remember the original. Maybe reruns.

"Cool. What do you do, Gillis?"

"Probation Officer for San Diego County."

"I'm looking for a job," I said. "Is there an age limit for becoming a Probation Officer?" I had already been looking for work and found that many if not most civil service jobs for firemen and law enforcement had age limits.

"I don't think so. And I know they are testing for new openings now."

"Really."

"Yeah, and the person you need to call is in the Human Resources office. Her name is . . ." He gave me her name, and even more surprising he actually remembered the phone number of Human Resources. I wrote it down and called the next day.

I decided I needed to look into the public sector. I was obviously ill-suited for survival in the private sector and had failed at everything from Standard Insurance Company to my present unemployment following Nurseryland's firing. At the time I tried to capitalize on my MFA in Sculpture and thought I could start at the bottom and try to find something in a community college. I was going to a California Department of Employment to help look for a job. I had never done anything like that before, but as they say, desperate times. The counselor for the job was very honest. She said it was impossible. The colleges have been told if they hire another white male they will lose their federal funding.

I was unemployed for exactly the eleven months it took me to get hired as a Correctional Deputy for San Diego County Probation. Applications for every civil service job I pursued ended dead. It took eleven months from the time I took the test to the date of hire. In that time, I had numerous interviews, written tests, background investigations, psychological exams (the psychologist said I had "command presence"), physical exams, and finally placement at Camp Barrett Honor Camp for Adult Male Felons.

Many years before I had taken a career aptitude test listing my compatibility for 100 occupations. The very last occupation for which I was suited, number 100, the absolute bottom, was law enforcement. But here I was, almost 49 years of age, a newly hired Correctional Deputy with a uniform allowance and a badge. I didn't really know what Probation Officers do, because I never thought I would be one. That's when I really got serious about Stoic philosophy.

* * * *

Chapter 12: The View from Above

And when you talk about men you should look upon things on earth as one who looks from above on things below: flocks, military camps, farms, marriages, divorces, births, foreign races, feasts, lamentations, market places, the whole medley and order derived from opposites.

Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* Book 7: 48

According to Diogenes Laertius, Zeno the Stoic, the founder of Stoic philosophy, went to the Oracle, probably the one at Delphi, to find out “what he should do to obtain the best life, and the god's response that he should take on the complexion of the dead. Whereupon, perceiving what this meant, he studied ancient authors (D.L., Book VII, ch. 1.2).” I've always thought that was how Heraclitus became the cosmologist of the Stoic school, but I've never found any reference that specifically indicates how he embraced the Obscure One, presumably western civilizations' first mystic.

From 1986-2002, except for the Sundays I was at Camp Barrett, I meditated once a week, early Sunday morning, usually before first light, with the purpose of producing Impulse drawings (see chapter 10). Over that period of time I produced 150-200 of what I considered “museum quality” Impulse ink brush drawings. After repeated disinterest and rejection by the art world, I stopped. It's a depressing subject, and I rarely think about the times I was rejected. I couldn't generate the motivation to continue. Instead of ink brush drawings, I began meditating in front of an altar instead of a drawing board and paper. The deep meditation I learned while preparing for the stroke of the “impulse” became the goal.

the Oracle

On the new altar, there was a pottery bowl with a candle, and on the wall was my Perfect wa drawing of 1984 from Nishikiwa. I sat on the floor in a half Lotus position, emptied my mind and meditated. Gradually, this Sunday morning ritual evolved. Occasionally, I had a question about the events of my life that were so pressing, so troublesome, that I wished I had access to the Oracle of Delphi, as Zeno and countless others did, to advise me. I decided that in this time and space I could imagine and create an Oracle. I would ask a question, then meditate with an empty mind until an answer was given.

The Practice. When I adopted Marcus Aurelius's *view from above* as a place I actually went to in spirit or Soul, I needed a way to get there. I used a Native American eagle feather sacred object—a bundle of 3 feathers bound by rawhide that includes a small tinkling bell. The feathers were probably white turkey feathers dipped in some golden brown die, but it was all symbolic anyway. The little tinkling bell was just barely audible when I held the feathers near my ear and fanned the air as I “flew” to the view from above.

It didn't work at first, but eventually it did. I didn't know where the answer came from—my daimon, my subconscious, somewhere out in the universe—I didn't really know, or care. I thought it was basically unknowable, unreliable, and rather ridiculous, but I persisted anyway. One Sunday morning, I called on the Oracle with a pressing problem. I had all these Impulse drawings stacked up in storage, and I didn't know what to do with them.

I asked the Oracle, “What am I to do with all these Impulse drawings? I can't show them, no one wants them, and I know that if I were to die tomorrow, Amielle would feel responsible to do something with them, and my problem would only be passed on to her. Usually, my so-called Oracle said nothing, and even when it did the words sounded mostly like I was simply talking to myself. This time the Oracle's voice was loud and clear, and with an immediacy that was startling.

“Burn them and be free!” it said.

It wasn't a disembodied voice, exactly; it was just strong words that came to my mind from somewhere with such force and certainty that I couldn't help but agree. And so I did. Well, I kept the ones I couldn't bear to part with, a dozen or so, and threw the rest away. I didn't burn them; I just threw them in the trash. Garbage. And that was the end of a 30-year-old fantasy I had of being an artist. Garbage. Every time I thought of doing art and being part of that world, I consciously put it out of my mind.

* * * *

Chapter 13: All My Bad Habits

“I can see why Daddy likes to smoke,” I said as I walked into the cabin. I was three or four years old. We were living in a cabin on Larch Mountain in the Cascade Range of Washington State. Father was a summer forest ranger after graduating from college, and the five of us—mother, father, my older sister and brother and I lived in a log cabin belonging to the US Forest Service. Father smoked cigarettes; mother hated this bad habit. She belonged to a Christian denomination that didn't allow smoking—or drinking or dancing or card games, et cetera. We kids thought it was fun to imitate him, and we would find little sticks and pretend to smoke them just like Daddy did. Mother hated that, too.

She threatened several times to make us smoke a real cigarette if she caught us pretending to smoke again. One day when we were playing in the woods near the cabin she came out to call us in for lunch and caught us one time too many. She went in and got a fresh pack from his carton of Lucky Strikes and gave one to each of us. This is actually one of my earliest memories as a child, and I clearly remember what happened next. My older sister and brother took one puff, threw theirs away, and ran in to lunch, promising never to pretend to smoke again. I stayed out and finished mine.

“I can see why Daddy likes to smoke,” I said after finishing my cigarette, and I walked into the cabin for lunch. This really happened exactly the way I remember it, and my mother confirmed it just a few years ago. I loved tobacco from my first cigarette to my last. Father quit smoking soon after we left Larch Mountain, but I didn't. Whenever I found a cigarette butt discarded on the side of the road I took it home and smoked what was left of it. I loved every form of tobacco—cigarettes, pipes, cigars, snuff, and chewing tobacco. I always bragged that if I wasn't afraid of needles I would probably mainline it.

I officially quit my pack a day habit when I was about 30. Then I smoked occasionally. Sometimes I would treat myself to one cigarette a day. When I became a Correctional Deputy at Camp Barrett, I switched to big, black cigars, one cigar a day, and I drank black coffee that sat in the officer's quarters so long the only flavor left was black acid. Loved it. The arrhythmia that started plaguing me at Nordstrom's returned. On my 50th birthday I was crew boss for a work crew out on weed abatement in the wilderness, and I knew then and there I would not live another 10 years if I didn't change. It was a hard decision. As Saint Augustine said of his own affection for pleasures of the flesh, I knew I should quit, but just not yet.

I stopped drinking coffee and switched to green tea. It wasn't popular then as it is now, but I knew of it from my years in Japan. I respected it but didn't really like it. There was no way it would ever take the place of a good cup of freshly brewed coffee, certainly nothing like my favorite, a double espresso. But I kept at it, substituting green tea for coffee and my heart was somewhat mollified, but not much. Obviously the tobacco had to go. I switched from back cigars, which I always inhaled, to Bugler Rolling Tobacco, the inmates' only choice, and we would sit together on one dormitory porch or another and roll our own.

Still not good enough. My heart was a little better, but my life long love affair with tobacco had to go. I switched to Copenhagen chewing tobacco as a transition to total abstinence and finally stopped. My heart was definitely better now, but not for long. I was still a heavy drinker.

I never really liked beer, and the only wine I could drink was cheap wine, and cheap wine in America is almost undrinkable. But I drank it—only for the effect. I was able to quit drinking when I was sleeping over in the officers' quarters, but on the week I was at home I drank a lot. Cheap wine wasn't good enough, and I had to drink at least a bottle to get any benefit from it, so I switched to hard liquor. After a few years my liquor habit went from whiskey and soda to whiskey without soda, then vodka on the rocks, Vodka kept thick and ice cold in the freezer and drunk straight from the bottle, the 2-liter bottle. My heart didn't like that either.

On the first of January, 2002. I quit them all—coffee, tobacco, and alcohol—for good. I wanted to take the pledge two years earlier, on 2000 (round numbers are easier to remember), but couldn't do it. I still had a lot of drinking to do. When it was finally time to quit, I quit, and never drank again. Alcohol addiction was the last of my bad habits. My arrhythmia was quite happy to go away then, for awhile, but there was an empty hole in my life.

* * * *

Chapter 14: The Mystical Experiment

The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention over and over again is the very root of judgment, character and will. No one is compus sui if he have it not. An education which would improve this faculty would be education par excellence.

William James, *Psychology: Briefer Course* (Harper Touchstone, 1961)

In October of the year I quit all my bad habits, I was restless and needed a change. Work was going well. I had promoted a couple of times and was now a Senior Probation Officer working in downtown San Diego's Hall of Justice. My life with Amielle was better than ever. We had moved to our own house in a better part of town. The Stoic Registry was registering Stoics all over the world. Health was good. So, why wasn't I satisfied with my place in life? I was, but there had to be more. I wanted to understand enlightenment and the mystical experience.

I had read about it, mostly from Walter Stace, Princeton philosophy professor who wrote *Mysticism and Philosophy*, and I had puzzled over the fragments of Heraclitus, as so many had for millennia before me. I had heard and read the stories of seekers finding a guru in India, but I wasn't even slightly interested in sitting at the feet of a master. In fact, the very thought of it, then and always, was anathema to me. I had to figure it out on my own. I always had to figure everything out on my own. My compulsion to always do it myself can perhaps be best believed when I tell you that I have cut my own hair all my adult life. Still do. I wouldn't even know how to behave in a barber's chair.

I had the Pubescent Girl Dream of Nishikiwa that inspired the Alpha Drawings metaesthetic ceremonies. I still did the Oracle meditation on Sundays, but now I wanted a real mystical experience. Something profound. Something real that showed me the way to enlightenment, whatever that was. I knew enough by reading Professor Stace that if I had a guru telling me their version of enlightenment that is what I would most likely experience. I didn't want to know what was *supposed* to happen. If it was going to happen I had to get there on my own. I had to cut my own hair. Leave my head alone!

Pneuma Will Power Meditation (PnWPM)

Today, the majority of meditation techniques align with the two classical Asian models based upon Hindu or Buddhist practices. Both were originally conceived as a fast track to stop the endless cycles of reincarnation in a single life time. Somewhere along the way after perhaps decades of effort we *may* have a theist (Hindu) or atheist (Buddhist) enlightenment experience, but there are no guarantees. The experience(s) we have, if any, will follow the expectations of our particular school. In other words, experiences of a student of Yogic meditation will not be the same as the student of Zen koans. I didn't want an experience any school told me I should expect. I had to follow my own plan. And, unlike the Asian models that guarantee nothing, ever, just in case I didn't have a mystical experience I wanted at least some practical benefit from all the effort I was about to undertake. At the least I wanted some practice that would strengthen the power of the will.

I've been meditating off and on much of my adult life. While in my twenties, I briefly studied a Hindu technique with the Ananda Marga Yoga Society in Portland, Oregon. I made the mistake of meditating after my work day and dinner was done, near bedtime. I could never stay awake long enough to get anything out of it. I quit. But, from them I learned about the lotus position, a Hindu yogic sitting technique, and a kind of meditation that could be summed up in a single sentence: Sit still, focus on breathing, and stop thinking.

I gave my practice a name, Pneuma Will Power Meditation (PnWPM). I called it "Pneuma" after the Stoic name for the divine breath of the cosmos, and "Will Power Meditation" after the minimal benefit I knew I would achieve simply by sitting still, focusing on my breath, and not thinking. With insights based entirely upon that conceptual foundation plus many hours of practice, I gradually became aware of three levels of meditation:

1. **Will Power**, so-called, because it was the most effortful stage and required considerable strength of will even to get into position and begin meditating. It took even more will power to stay there and deal with the aches, pains, and itches and the wandering, disobedient mind. I accepted this effort because I knew it would contribute to my practice as a Stoic. For Stoics, the location of all good and evil is in the human will. By strengthening it we can choose our internal dialogue and manage our decisions with much greater wisdom.
2. **Deep Meditation**. The aches, pains, and itches were still present, but they were much less troublesome. The mind still wandered off and tried to dominate the situation, but now the will power has won, and the mind didn't get very far before it was pulled back by the will to the breathing silence. There was a feeling and realization of being in deep meditation, and that I now joined all those who meditated before me for hundreds of years.
3. **Ananda**. At some point in my experience as a meditator, I suddenly and unexpectedly experience what the Hindus call *ananda*, or bliss. I only found that is what it's called because I looked it up on the Internet, and then I knew what the first name of the Ananda Marga Yoga Society meant. This level is called that because it *is* that. Ananda comes to you; you do not go to it. I was never able to will it to come to me no matter how long I sat. It came when it was ready, and that's all I know. When it happens, it is unmistakable. There is no question. It's as obvious as sitting in air one minute and sitting underwater the next.

And with this beginning, my mystical experiment was underway.

* * * *

Chapter 15: Great Insights

The Record

*In November 2002 when I was 57, I began searching for a mystical experience. I began meditating six days a week with the purpose of knowing enlightenment; on the seventh I continued Oracle Meditation. The following are some of the journal notes that were taken from the conceptual beginning of this search to the concluding realization of the second insight I called, "Pure Love." The entries contained herein are taken from handwritten notes recorded on the day the thought or event occurred. Most of the journal entries are not included due to the tedium of reading great quantities of factual information. Italicized comments **within** the entry are comments made some time later. The journal entries describing Great Insights 1 and 2 are followed by personal commentary, not italicized, which may have been written very soon or days or years after the experience.*

The Journal Record: *it was called the "Lotus Journal," because I was determined to progress from my usual half-lotus position in meditation to the full lotus that had always been difficult for me. I had the idea that my determination to achieve enlightenment would be increased by the greater discipline that was required. The following excerpts are from this journal.]*

08 NOV 2002 @ 10 PM: One should not meditate three hours a day to achieve a mystical experience. One should only meditate three hours a day to become a person who meditates three hours a day. We become what we do.

That attitude, while commendable, is just words. It may sound profound, but it means nothing. Nevertheless, I include it here to show the point at which I began. I was a Senior Probation Officer for San Diego County, working as the chief Superior Court Officer at the Hall of Justice, downtown. The journal entry above is what I thought some of the time, alternated with hoping for much more. The next entry, written nearly three months later, shows the fatigue that is setting in.

05 FEB 03: This morning I was trying to remember why I started getting up at 4:30-4:45 every morning, an hour earlier than required to get ready for work. I know it had something to do with the return to arrhythmia stress I suddenly and unexpectedly encountered in January after at least four months of living symptom free. And, I know that when I am in a state of advanced distress I typically believe my life will soon end, and when I'm in that frame of mind I typically decide that if there's little time left I'd best forget everything else and seek enlightenment, the mystical experience. But, this morning, I wasn't sure if the pursuit of enlightenment was the reason for my new early morning commitment, or if it had to do with meditation as a healing routine . . . or what? In other words, if I had a specific goal, or a bunch of them, I couldn't, I can't remember what it was. I need a specific goal and a mantra as a reminder. Here it is:

"I am seeking awareness of the One. Please show me the way."

I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't have a meditation teacher and only knew a little about the so-called mystical experience from a book written by the late Princeton philosopher, Walter Stace. I didn't really know what it was going to do, and I didn't know how to go about it. Nevertheless, I was determined to make it happen somehow.

15 FEB 03 @ 4:15 AM: I shall attempt a review of what I know, or remember from what others say, about enlightenment. Awareness of the One includes a collapse of the subject/object continuum, and the self as a distinct and separate entity apart from all other, is seen, or felt and known, to be illusory. There is some debate on whether this is a state of awareness of an objective external reality, or a subjective state more closely akin to a self-induced hypnosis or psychosis. A momentary madness. The experience of ecstasy or euphoria reported to accompany this momentary madness, if you will, is such that one who experiences it associates such a feeling as realizing oneness with the divine. A divine ecstasy. Whether the divine ecstasy is an objective depiction of reality or a subjective disorientation of the proper functioning of the brain is not, and perhaps cannot, be known.

A Pyrrhonian would ask whether the divine ecstasy of Oneness or the cold estrangement of separation is the true condition of reality (i.e., which is the illusion: oneness or separation?). We can argue both sides until we lose consciousness, and what have we then accomplished or proven other than the futility of such arguments? For one whose only certain experience is the aloneness of the self in our familiar world, the world of the Stoic, all one really has is partial knowledge, hearsay truth, like one who listens to the tall tales of travelers to a foreign and exotic land. Of course, I would like to go see such a place for myself, but the price of passage is so high. They say you have to sell all that you have and leave everything, including your self behind. Then, as Heraclitus says, you must expect the unexpected.

Some have found this place alone; others have followed the directions of a guide or guru. For me, having the same faith in gurus that I have in used car salesmen pretty much guarantees that if I ever find this place I'll have to get there on my own. And when I get there, if I ever do, will I have left the real world or the illusion behind? They say that those who get there are certain of which is which—which is an experience I would like to have at last.

Great Insight #1: Empty Sky

Work, sobriety, and meditation continued. Four months later, seven months after setting my intention, I had the first experience that I would call extraordinary, maybe even "mystical." Then, nothing but physical problems for three months preceding the second experience. Then nothing for 10 years! This was not and is not a quick and easy path. In the vast majority of times, the discipline of meditation to achieve depths of understanding is answered by a kind of flat, empty silence—which led me to often wonder if I was doing it right or wrong.

09 JUN 03: Lotus Meditation Realized. I don't believe that you go to a sacred space; it comes. Just as some days writing flows easily and well, and some days drawings look so good you're surprised at yourself, so too does the sacred space come to you. You must provide the environment to catch it

when it comes. If the draftsman isn't drawing or the writer isn't writing how can he experience the good days and the bad. Meditate, and the sacred space will come.

11 JUN 03 (first thought after meditation this morning): Old men should replace their love of women with a love of philosophy, or God.

13 JUN 03 @ 5:45 AM: Current Mantra

Mind being (breath)
Mind being (breath)
Mind being (breath)
Mind being (breath)

Being mind (breath)
Being mind (breath)
Being mind (breath)
Being mind (breath)

I attempted to break up the boredom of meditation and mind-wandering with a mantra. In fact, this was the 7th mantra I created and was the one in use when I experienced my first Great Insight (see the following):

16 JUN 03: A new Meditation Level. The chronology of events for Monday, 4:30 AM, a work day:

*4:50: performed Stick Action Meditation (SAM) in the front room

*5:10: Began Lotus Meditation in the monasterium

*5:30: Looked at the clock and decided to continue meditating a little longer

*Approximately 5:35-5:45: I went deeper than I ever have before. I seemed to withdraw from the world through my face, then suddenly I was in an empty space. After returning, about 5-10 minutes later, it [the image that came to mind] seemed as if for the first time I emerged from the sea into the sky. It was an entirely empty space and a profound calm. I didn't want to return [to normal reality]. In fact, while I was there it was as if I was physically incapable of returning. I remember wondering, "Is this enlightenment?"

I think I could have stayed longer. Even though I'm not used to a half hour in the Full Lotus position, I was in no pain or discomfort. I returned only because I had to get ready to go to work. I didn't think those thoughts, I was just aware of them.

Now that I've had this experience, now that I've reached this level of clarity, I believe it will be easier to return. Not having a guru or guide to explain these things, I don't know if what I experienced was enlightenment, but I don't really care. I'm satisfied with what I've "seen." I do wish to return, and my meditation efforts will be directed there, and I do expect that I will "learn" more the more often I have such an experience, but I don't wonder any longer if I'm qualified to teach meditation, and I'm reluctant to say I've experienced enlightenment. I think I have, but I need to see more to be certain.

6:38 AM: I have 3 minutes to leave for work.

Commentary

- The Empty Sky is the nothing we don't know. It is ineffable because it is extra-sensory. In its presence is a feeling of awe and very great attraction.
- The Great Sea is great because it is so vast. It is the universe. It is a sea in that every part is connected to every other part and they combine as the Whole.
- There is something divine about the Great Sea and the Empty Sky; but it must be known that the former is the child of the latter. The Whole is contained by the All.
- I don't think the Stoics related the Whole to the All as a child to a creator, but it is. That's how I experienced it. That's how it was perceived by some part of my consciousness in deep meditation.

When I emerged from the Great Sea, I “saw” the Empty Sky, the nothing we don't know. I was unprepared for a concept that was beyond human comprehension, because we can't know, or at least I can't know, something so far beyond the structure of usual human intelligence. Empty sky was the only thing I could think of to call it because that's how it appeared visually—a black emptiness of a sky without sun, moon, or stars or any other defining features. And yet it was a very real presence, a benevolent presence, with a sense of joy in its presence which I felt immediately after emerging from the Great Sea. Although my body didn't leave the Great Sea my head and shoulders were out and above it the whole time I experienced the Empty Sky.

And, it should be noted, the Great Sea was also entirely black, presented as a strip at the bottom of my visual space, separated from the Empty Sky by a thin halo of faint light. I have no reason to call it a sea other than that's what it seemed. I have no reason to say that it represented the material universe, except that I knew it was. In this experience, water was perhaps a superior symbol of the cosmos than fire, because while we are in the Great Sea everything is connected. Every part is connected to every other part until all become what Stoics refer to as the whole. There was no reference to all parts lying on a continuum of opposites, and it wasn't until later (Great Insight #3 in contrast with #5) that this understanding was experienced and realized.

In terms of modern philosophy, the Empty Sky and Great Sea may be related to Kant's two-world hypothesis, where the space-time world of appearance and the more real world of spirit behind the appearance, are both true. A binary reality where both science and religion can coexist. If we see Empty Sky as the reality of the spiritual world and the Great Sea as the world of appearances to the mind, then we can see how Kant's idea that what we see exists as it does because our mind and its reason is constructed as it is. But, behind the appearance of the material world of the Great Sea, the Empty Sky, that which we cannot see is what speaks to us in myths and symbolic language of a spiritual force that is more real and is essentially responsible and ruler of our familiar world. In this context, Perfect wa, the nothing that we don't know, is also strangely reminiscent of Kant's two-worlds hypothesis.

In terms of modern physics, this past year (2018), fifteen years after the Empty Sky experience, I watched a documentary film made by XIVE TV (2011) entitled, “Everything and Nothing: the Amazing

Science of Empty Space.” I learned that the flash of light emitted at the instant of creation is still visible today in the form of microwaves which we can pick up with the antennae of our TV, appearing as static on the screen. This part, the first hour of the documentary, was about what can see here in the universe, the 100 billion galaxies and how they came into being.

The second hour shifted from everything to nothing. I learned that 14 billion years ago all that we see appeared out of nothing. Scientists struggled with that from the 20th century all the way back to Aristotle who is the source of the famous dictum, “Nature abhors a vacuum.” But he was wrong. Quantum mechanics shows it is impossible to have nothing, and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle shows that the microscopic world is a world of uncertainty. If we examine a small amount of space the more we know about where something is the less we know how it moves. We cannot know both at the same time, and thus the *uncertainty*.

Then I learned that when an electron appears in so-called empty space its opposite appears, the anti-electron appears simultaneously. The two combine to create energy, then disappear. These electrons appearing and disappearing in a vacuum gave birth to Quantum Field Theory where the particle becomes a virtual particle, and “*Nothing* is a teeming mass of virtual particles appearing and disappearing trillions of time in a second.”

According to physicists, quantum mechanics is currently the most accurate and powerful theory of the natural world that we know. When the universe was born it was smaller than an atom, governed by quantum physics, not classical physics. We live in a quantum universe, and “Nothing has shaped everything....We're simply the debris of the annihilation of matter and anti-matter at the beginning of time.”

* *

22 JUN 03: There is no higher aspiration than to love the Logos of Nature for your creation, you of all creatures, a mind being.

23 JUN 03: Lotus Meditation is communicating with my creator in a language we share: silence. (Conceived in meditation at about 5:35 AM)

28 JUN 03 @ 4:10 AM: Celibacy, vegetarianism, and withdrawal from the world appear to be vestiges of human sacrifice to appease the gods. Personal health should be the sole criteria of our practice. Living according to nature, human and individual nature, should be our guide.

01 JUL 03: Having suffered another episode in a continuing and all too frequent appearance of exhaustion, I decided that sleeping in this morning would be better than doing Lotus Meditation. And so I did. After awakening a half hour later than usual, and feeling uncommonly refreshed, the thought occurred to me: what would happen if I stopped meditating altogether? As a matter of personal observation, it seems to me that getting a good night's sleep is a more accurate predictor of how I'm going to feel all day than is the usual session of Lotus Meditation, and getting a good night's sleep is the best way I know to feel physically and emotionally well. It's just a thought.

03 JUL 03:The discomfort in my leg continues. The Lotus position is a stern and unforgiving taskmaster, and I wonder if it's nothing more than an unnecessary affectation of religiosity. I can hear an imaginary guru right now, saying, "You have to make a choice: do you want nice, healthy hips, knees, and ankles; or, do you want enlightenment? Make a decision: either get on with it or get out of here. But above all, stop whining!" I finished my meditation sitting cross-legged.

04 JUL 03:This morning in meditation, I extended my usual Lotus Meditation time to about one hour because I don't have to go to work today. I first meditated in the full Lotus position until I was tired of that, then I went into a half Lotus (left leg atop), then I finished with the cross-legged position.

18 JUL 03: With an ache in my right hip that worsens each day, I'm suspending meditation until I'm reasonably free of pain.

20 JUL 03: Yesterday, I was compelled by the discomfort in my right hip to go to urgent care at Kaiser Hospital. Diagnosis -- after seeing two physicians assistants, an M.D., making a phone call to the Orthopedic Department, having a white blood cell count test, and x-rays -- was acute bursitis. Three hours later and prescriptions for an anti-inflammatory and pain reliever (Vicodin), I was sent home. 24 hours later, I feel much better, but am still unable to sit even in a relaxed, cross-legged position without considerable discomfort. The Lotus position, I'm sure, would produce intense pain, masked somewhat by the medication I'm taking. The point is, do I take a vacation from meditation, or do I concede to the frailties of the body and seek a new path to awareness? Whatever the decision, I won't be meditating until I heal, which may be a good long while.

30 JUL 03: I'm back . . . sort of. I thought of quitting meditation altogether, but the thought was disconcerting, and the sacred space in the monastery both invited and saddened me every time I looked at it.

31 JUL 03: Yesterday, all day, my knees ached so much I had difficulty walking. I can only attribute it to the Prostate Lotus position I was in for about 15 minutes. Once again, I'm having serious doubts about meditation and its crippling effects. Perhaps it's time to leave that twenty-year chapter of my life behind. Let it go. . . . Is there life after meditation?

Great Insight #2: Pure Love

Journal Record: *After the Empty Sky experience the continuation of meditation in the full lotus position became increasingly difficult, even painfully uncomfortable. It should be noted in the entry of 05 August that Stick Action Meditation (SAM) was still evolving after 14 years and had not conceptually arrived at its final action meditation status. The following are excerpt from the "Lotus Journal" of 2003. NOTE: All days and entries are not preserved here; only the ones that later seemed most relevant.]*

05 AUG 03: This morning, I meditated for the first time since my joint problems, and I did so directly after performing New Stick [SAM 2], also for the first time. This was cross-legged meditation sitting on

a cushion. I've never liked to meditate in this position, and the few times I've tried it I was unable to go very deeply into it, certainly not as far as the Ananda. I suppose if I continue calling it Lotus Meditation, it will be more a reflection of its purpose (enlightenment) and origins (the Full Lotus) than the actual practice.

28 AUG 03: this morning I used the Chinese stool and sat there feeling sorry for myself because my meditation practices have all been compromised by my physical disabilities.

06 SEP 03: Empty Sky. Working my way through the book, *Vision of the Buddha*, I believe I may have experienced "enlightenment" last June after all. That is, I believe I experienced the introduction to the mystical experience and that there are more experiences to come. As of today, what I experienced then is what I believe were several minutes of intense clarity of "nothingness."

I want to go back.

18 SEP 03: Joy Love. It began ½ hour into meditation. I noticed a "Mona Lisa smile" at the corners of my mouth, then it spread from head to heart. First joy, then love. I was awash in it. Then it gradually subsided. Joy and Love for what? Nothing. There was no reason. Just the experience.

Commentary

- Pure love has neither ally nor alloy. It is pure and without attachment. It manifests itself as the life force in all things. Stoics would call it Pneuma, but they did not connect it to Love. Love is not a subject that Stoics understood well. However, we should remember that Zeno made Eros the Patron Deity of the utopia described in his *Republic*.
- Great Insight #1, Empty Sky, was a mental construct with some feeling of euphoria, while Great Insight #2, Pure Love, was all feeling. There was no environment of any kind for that feeling, the lack of environment was necessary to keep it pure. As a result, every thought I have about its relationship to Empty Sky is hypothetical.
- What is the relationship between the two? But first, what is Pure Love. It appears to be a natural force or power that generates attraction and procreation throughout the cosmos.
- If Pure Love is the regenerating power of Nature, our God, then it is either an attribute of the Divine, or it is the Divine itself. At the very least we can accurately say that it is an attribute of the Divine, and that's enough. In every way it deserves our respect, even amazement. Think of all it does in the cycles of Nature and in the lives of every creature on Earth.
- The dance of love, whether it's done by a bird or a boy in love with a girl is a vivid reminder that Nature choreographs the performance of life.

Anyone who has known the power of great love for any person, place, or thing knows what this feeling is. But, to experience great love without any reference to anything is quite extraordinary, and I have

never felt such a thing before or since. To me, pure love suggests that this most formidable fact of life is like a law of nature, such as gravity. Gravity functions as an attraction on another body regardless of the name we give to the body being attracted. The feeling of pure love was complete in itself. It started, lasted for awhile, then ended—not unlike a light turned on for a specific interval, then turned off. There was no residual influence or benefit.

On the day of this experience I remember sitting on the San Diego trolley on the way to work and seeing all the ways people distracted themselves from having to think about and feel their lives. Smart phones and texting hadn't been invented yet, so people still interacted with one another. A couple of men were talking about the baseball season with the considerable knowledge of dedicated spectator sport fans. It felt strangely odd. I looked around again and tried to recreate the feeling of pure love I had in that morning's meditation. I thought maybe it had increased my affection for humanity somehow, but I felt nothing more or less towards them than I usually did. They were all strangers. Their existence today was no more significant than it was the day before.

There's nothing more to say about this exceptional physical experience of pure love except to note two things: GI #1 was primarily conceptual and the second GI #2 was primarily feeling. First head then heart. Other than this observation I can only say from that meditation experience that pure love is real, it exists as a brute fact, and it seems likely to be, for lack of a better description, a law of nature. Traditional Stoics believe that Nature is God and God is Nature, thus if we can accept that love is a law of nature, then we can know with confidence that love is an attribute of God.

Years Later. I don't know if Pure Love is the life force that manifests itself in all things. It could be, but wouldn't that require an opposite? Is that really the essential continuum of all existence in a material world? Does that require a love/hate relationship with the world, and was that how material existence was born? That would certainly be related to Heraclitus's continuum. For example, “We must know that war is common to all, and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away through strife (frag. 61, Burnet trans.)”

If there is pure love in a material world, our familiar world, then inasmuch as everything with physicality must lie on a continuum of existence there must also be pure hate. Where does that come from and what is it? Or, does it really exist. Stoics say there is no evil in the world, only the absence of virtue. Could the same be said of love? Is the opposite reality on the far side of a continuum simply the lack of it's opposite. If that were so, then we're dealing with a polarity of existence and non-existence. This seems quite fundamental, but I need to think about it some more. I can speculate. You can speculate. Let's philosophize.

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Chapter 16: 10 Years of Ananda

Journal Record: *It's now 10 years since Great Insight #2, Pure Love.” There have been no further insights during this period, but I have cured myself of a disabling health condition with a form of chanting meditation that I created years earlier. After briefly experimenting with the Vipassana meditation method and realizing an intense disliking for it I permanently settled into Pneuma Will Power Meditation (PnWPM). I prefer the raw discipline of simply following one's breath to following detailed and constant instruction on searching for feeling in one's body parts.*

I'm still seeking enlightenment, but don't really think about it much. I continue to meditate almost every morning. My meditation posture has settled on the Burmese position which I learned from the 10-day Vipassana retreat (which I silently endured despite wanting to get up and leave a hundred times). My only paranormal experience is the Ananda euphoria of deep meditation.

Suddenly, without preamble or expectation, something remarkable happened. The following are excerpts from the “Sage Journal” of 2013-14. NOTE: All days and entries are not preserved here; only the ones that seemed most relevant.

Great Insight #3: The Stoic Sage

22 NOV 13: during PnWPM

Consciousness Expanded!

5:55 am: “Stoic philosophy is little more than a drop in the bucket.” The thought, *Stoic philosophy is little more than a drop in the bucket*, was based upon a feeling, an awareness of expanded consciousness at the end of an hour of PnWPM. I was finishing meditation, opening my eyes, eyes open but not focused on any one thing but on the images and icons of my meditation corner. I want to write it with a little more poetry, such as *Stoic philosophy is little more than a drop in the ocean of consciousness*, but the exact words were as stated earlier.

10 am: Something's different. I feel different. I see things differently. When I look at something I see more, not anything invisible, just more of what is already there that I would have overlooked—plants, trees, rocks, and insignificant things, a brick, a wall, the loamy smell of dirt after last night's rain. People are more interesting to me. I look at them longer, make eye contact with strangers. I smile at them. Sometimes I laugh at them. I let them go in front of me. I feel calmer, slower. I feel my body, my muscles working, feet walking. They seem very interesting to me. I like the feel of my feet taking small steps and large steps. I feel a little spacey, slightly drunk. I am without fear.

I've felt this way since my expanded consciousness experience just before 6 am. I don't want it to end, but I expect it will any moment now. We'll see. I had the experience all during my Stair-climbing

exercise, stopping at Sprouts grocery store on the way home, then going to Trader Joe's grocery store... I would like to return to the expansion every time I meditate. There is much that I can learn by being here.

*

4 pm: Well, it's over. Back to normal by lunchtime. I was unable to get anything done this afternoon. I meditated for 35 minutes after a nap. Nothing. Afterwards, I just sat around and thought. Drank tea. One of the things I thought about was how tedious all my Stoic work had become, and how I would really enjoy retiring, turning it over to others, everything, leave the little drop of my Stoic world and return to the ocean of consciousness. I'm not talking about dying, just spending the rest of my days meditating and doing chores. I should note that on several occasions I thought of this experience as an expansion of consciousness by *one degree*.

Later. I can't tell you how strange it is to be an entirely new person. I say a "new" person, because it was still me, but I had a more noble character than I usually do, and that's why I called the experience, "The Stoic Sage." In truth, I don't know with certainty what it feels like to be the mythical Stoic sage, but it seemed that I was that at the time. After the feeling started in meditation and continued for more than five hours, I had plenty of time to examine my new self, but what could I compare it to? Only my usual self. I can say that in that span of time I was an alien presence, a demigod, but I don't think I had any special powers. It didn't even occur to me to manipulate myself or my environment in any unusual way. I didn't levitate or leap tall buildings in a single bound.

It was unquestionably a positive experience, and I felt disappointment when I knew it had gone. The ancients believed that when one had become a Stoic sage they would always be a sage. If that's true, then I did *not* become a sage. Or, the ancients were wrong. Maybe it's possible to be a Stoic sage for five hours.

Great Insight #4: Pure Trance

[**Two months later.** Excerpt from the "Sage Journal" of 2013-14. NOTE: All days and entries are not preserved here; only the ones that later seemed most relevant.]

23 JAN 14: Thursday

Sludge

0515-0650: Difficult to explain, but this morning when I went into the Ananda depths of meditation I did not experience bliss or joy; I experienced "sludge." I don't know what else to call it. Heaviness. Going *through* the mountain instead of over it. It was neither pleasant nor unpleasant exactly, neutral, but heavy, deep. Sludge. Sludge-ness, and it all came over me while I was saying my mantra, a kind of prayer asking to expand Ananda consciousness. Right in the middle of the mantra I sank down into this sludge—and *stayed there*.

This lasted *at least* 40 minutes, probably more. It lasted through changing the position of my seating posture—twice, and it even continued when I decided to test it by finishing off four sips of cold tea left in my cup from the beginning of meditation. The feeling was very strong and persistent. Several

times I wondered if this was some kind of physical or psychological transformation, a necessary precursor to getting what I had asked for—“*Please show me how to expand Ananda consciousness.*” But there was no way of knowing, and I had no certain verbal or intuitive insights as to what was going on, so I just waited it out.

Finally, I decided this had lasted long enough. I sat as erectly as possible and consciously made myself feel strong and alert. I was not going to let it—whatever *it* was—keep me down in the sludge any longer. I was going to rise above it, which I did, physically and mentally, but it took at least 10 minutes to dissipate. When I came out of meditation I sat with my eyes open, staring straight ahead, for a full 5 minutes before I was able to get up and begin my day.

25 JAN 14: Saturday 0530-0630

PnWPM: 0625: I haven't been able to experience a real Ananda state since my sludge experience and since my back has been aching nonstop (since Wednesday). Worst back situation since I was in Nishikiwa 31 years ago. In fact, the only bad back since then. I'm feeling exhausted, tired all the time, even when I get plenty of sleep. A strange time.

[*Years Later.*] Have you ever been in a deep trance? Then you'll know what I mean. This was a deep trance. I was comfortable, but I was also stiff and essentially paralyzed. I knew I could stop this condition whenever I wanted to, I somehow knew that was allowed, but it seemed like I could have stayed in deep trance for *hours*. It ended when it did because after 40 minutes of sitting in this strange condition I had had enough. I chose as a matter of will to leave that trance state and return to normalcy. Doing so required fixity of purpose and a strong will to override this strange paralysis.

I didn't know what a trance was until I had one. It appeared without warning and took possession of my body without permission. To the best of my recollection, I had never considered, planned for, or desired being in a trance. IT came to me; I did not go to IT. I don't know why. I don't even know the purpose. I didn't have any grand visions or great insights while in this trance. It was like an introduction to trance. Period. If Great Insight #2 is Pure Love, then #4 may be Pure Trance.

What does that mean?

27 JAN 14: Monday: Skipped morning meditation altogether due to continuing difficulty with lower back. At 0330 hours I took 2 Ibuprofen and 25 mgs of diphenhydramine/HCl (Benadryl), which, of course, kept me asleep beyond by usual wake up for PnWPM.

Great Insight #5: The Dark Side

28 JAN 14: Tuesday

Gravitas Ananda

0455-0630: PnWPM. At 0600 hours, about the time I was getting ready to complete my morning meditation, I slipped into the deep Ananda trance state. Once again I found no bliss-joy there. It

wasn't sludge, exactly, and I didn't even think of the word until later. Words that came to mind were strength, power, Jenghis Khan. There wasn't a shred of bliss-joy, and as I considered this, even while in this strange kind of Ananda state, *I recognized the existence of bliss-joy*, but it was far away and meant nothing to me. Irrelevant. I was in my world and the bliss-joy people were in theirs. We existed on a continuum, and I was on the Dark Side.

I've given this new meditation level the name *Gravitas Ananda*, because that describes the feeling best. In all the years I have experienced Joy Ananda it never even occurred to me there was any other possibility. This is something entirely new to me, not just in meditation but in my life as well.

It could be this is something missing from my personality. However, I have found that gravitas can also be a mask for a person who takes him or herself *way* too seriously and is more impressed with who they are than I am. Of course, that opinion may have been formed from having so little experience with really impressive people, those who were exceptional enough to wear high seriousness well.

We'll see where this Gravitas Ananda state goes. I welcome its return. It's not a bad feeling. In fact, I really enjoyed it and wanted more of it. I know I could learn from it. Today, as I walked to my stair-climbing exercise I kept thinking about what clothes I should wear and the model and color of car I should drive as one who represents and operates on the Dark Side. It would be a significant change from what I now wear and drive. The thought of such a radical change in my life was exciting.

More good news: my lower backache is mostly gone. My overall health is returning to normal. I feel strong.

29 JAN 14: Wednesday afternoon: I came upon an idea I've heard and seen many times before, but I never knew what to do with it. Until today, I just left it alone. Now, I understand it—or I'm beginning to. The cosmology of good and evil is that good apparently cannot exist without evil, but as a result of my first-hand experience I now understand that cosmic evil is not the boogeyman and scary stuff we associate with devils and demons. It's *power*. It came through to me in the two trance meditation experiences I have had, beginning with *Pure Trance*, then *Gravitas Ananda*. These were my introductions to the other face of the divine within.

In order for the phenomenon of existence to come into being and thrive there must also be power. And, because we are a spark of the divine, as all creatures are, this power necessarily extends to the individual and nurtures a desire for strength and control in the human will. Theologians call it evil, but it is really a feeling of power and strength. It is devoid of bliss-joy, and perhaps beauty, but doesn't have any interest in them. As Heraclitus said, "God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger; but he takes various shapes, just as fire, when it is mingled with spices, is named according to the aroma of each (frag. 36, Burnet). To God all things are fair and good and right, but men hold some things wrong and some right (ibid., 60)."

This is a subject of theology that has escaped me until this afternoon. Gravitas Ananda is the divine within as surely as Joy Ananda, and as difficult as it may be, this other side of the *god continuum* is important to understand and accept. It takes courage to open one's mind to the Dark Side of the

polarity, especially if one was conditioned in childhood and youth to associate this face of Ananda with some anthropomorphic being, such as Lucifer, Satan, the Devil. The feeling of what I am calling *gravitas* in order to avoid the various fears associated with it is a feeling of power and strength, not fear or danger. And, it too is God—I keep reminding myself over and over—and Joy Ananda cannot exist without it.

I believe this is one of the greatest realizations one can have on the road to wisdom. Wisdom cannot be claimed without understanding the nature of good *and* evil. I admit that after my Gravitas Ananda experience, lasting about 1/2 hour in yesterday morning's meditation, I attempted to recreate the feeling of it all day. I wanted to feel it again and again. It has the same kind of intoxicating attraction as Joy Ananda leading to the consciousness expansion of 22 November. I wanted to feel it again this morning when I meditated, but I didn't, and I was frankly annoyed at my failure to do so. As the Stoics say, with the frustration of desire comes disappointment and anger.

To have the cold heart, or no heart, of the Dark Prince is not at all uncomfortable. Once again, as happened when I was temporarily being a Stoic Sage, I had no fear. Apparently many of us, perhaps the majority of us, live with fear in one form or another pretty much all the time. Those of us who are neither sages nor Dark Princes appear to have a responsibility to choose which side of the continuum we would prefer. After considerable thought, and not as easily as one might expect, I chose the side of the Stoic Sage.

15 SEP 16: In meditation this morning it occurred to me that we do NOT choose between the Stoic Sage (#3) and the Dark Side (#5). We are in possession of BOTH qualities of character as a matter of necessity, by existing in the physical world. We CAN choose between virtue and no virtue, or evil. The Dark Side is “dark” because it is without love. We all live on a continuum from light to dark, from love to lust, from Joy Ananda to Gravitas Ananda. The key to living well is to correctly align one's actions according to what the situation requires. One's location on that individual continuum between brotherly love and lust for power is dependent on the wisdom brought to the matter to be considered and/or acted upon.

This is not simply a prescription for living the life of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. It is not a recommendation to be both good and evil, to be virtuous one day and amoral and without a conscience the next. It's between being kindly and benevolent when warranted and harsh and severe when warranted. There are times and places and people that may require both extremes and in the moderate middle of this dynamic continuum. Stoics can and will know both joy and gravitas, but to be a sage one must on all occasions adhere to the cardinal virtues.

Is such a thing even possible? Absolutely. Can a Stoic sage be a warrior? Absolutely. But a true warrior is not an angry or hysterical or vicious murderer. He or she is one who can kill and be just. So must the Stoic sage be more than one thing, but ALWAYS a person of noble character. This is the necessary action of a Dark Prince not the sadistic meanness of a Marquis de Sade. A true warrior shows respect. There are times when everyone can be the Dark Prince. A sage can be both harsh and kind, but not both just and unjust or courageous and cowardly or decorous and degenerate or wise and foolish. The sage is always just, courageous, decorous, and wise even when conquering the enemy or building an

empire. The sage knows exactly what action is needed on every occasion, and it's not always pleasant. Could doctors perform surgery if they were afraid of inflicting pain? Inflicting pain is not evil but doing so unjustly is. That's the difference between being hard and being evil. The sage can be hard, but will not be evil.

Athena was a warrior and the goddess of Justice all at the same time. When in doubt let Athena be our guide. Don't forget, Athena was the noble side of Zeus, and so is the Stoic sage. Here are some of the attributes of Athena: the goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, just warfare, strength, crafts, skill, and the companion of heroes. Does anyone see any evil or a lack of virtue here?

Great Insight #6:
Dream Trance: Evolution
written 19-21 September 16

18 September 16, 0500: I awoke thinking, "What a clever dream." I was in an art class at an unknown school. I could see other students as shadowy figures walking around the room. No details. The teacher had made an assignment for an individual project—to make something in clay. No specific direction, but there was a deadline. The deadline was fast approaching, and I had nothing. Barely a minute before the deadline was up, I quickly sketched a picture on a pad of paper.

I had no idea how I got the idea—it just came to me in a rush. With rapid strokes, I sketched the picture of human head, a clay bust on a sculpture pedestal. The bust in my sketch was mostly finished, but more work needed to be done. In my drawing I had deliberately left it unfinished. Suddenly, the quick sketch became a room with a floor, and on the floor all around the pedestal were toy animals in plastic, cloth, all kinds of material but none in clay, only the human bust was made of clay.

All these other figures, these other animals were all finished, whole, even polished. There were hundreds of them, and the animals they represented in real life had all been here on Earth for a long time, even millions of years before humans, such as the dragonfly that was perfected as a species back in the age of the dinosaurs. All of them had reached the peak of their evolution long ago, while the newest among them in this room, the human being represented by the unfinished clay bust, was still evolving.

How is this possible? How did we, such a young player in nature's drama, so quickly dominate the entire planet and every animal in it? Who are we? Where did we come from?

And, with those thoughts I awoke. It was 5 am, Sunday, the 18th. I wanted to get up because I wanted to meditate. I'm almost never in a hurry to meditate; I just do it as part of my daily routine without actually looking forward to it. But I felt different. When I awoke I had the impression that I had come into possession of a great truth, and this great truth was literally, physically *heavy*. The question that came to me as I was awaking, the *who are we* question, weighted me down. My head and shoulders felt heavy. I was stooped. This was real. This was really happening.

I went through my usual Sunday morning ceremony, including making tea, gonging, addressing the icons on my wall, et cetera, right up to the chanting of "*Naturam Venerans*." When I began chanting, I realized that not only did my body feel abnormal my voice was really—weird. It broke so much I couldn't make and hold a steady tone. Gravelly. It's difficult to describe. It didn't sound like my voice at all, but it wasn't too bad after I stopped fighting it. I can only describe it as gravel trying to sing. With determination I was able to finish the chant.

I probably started meditating around 0530 hours, maybe a little later, but the dream was still fresh in my consciousness. I immediately went into deep meditation, then more gradually went into a profound trance. But nothing happened. I didn't hear voices or have conversations with the spirit world while I was in this trance. In fact, it was just blank. I didn't have sustained thought or any movement for nearly *two hours!* I could think if I wanted to, but I didn't want to, I could move if I wanted to, but I didn't want to.

Slowly, I opened my eyes and looked at my watch. It was 0720 hours. I let my eyes return to their slitted position and eased out of the trance. By 0730 hours the heavy weight that came with the dream and then the trance was lifted, and I felt completely normal—but puzzled. What was that all about? There were times when it seemed similar to Gravititas Ananda. In fact, it was Gravititas Ananda, except there was no orientation to the Dark Side of the God Polarity. There was really no orientation at all, just blank, neither positive nor negative.

But, I liked it, and I had no interest in leaving it while I was there. It felt good and right, and several times the thought "regeneration" came to mind. But if there was any regeneration going on it wasn't a physical regeneration. Within two days of the experience I suffered lower back pain that necessitated a visit to my doctor. The last time I had a similar trance, or any unusual meditation experience at all, was "Gravititas Ananda" on January 28, 2014, but that was more than 2 1/2 years earlier. There was definitely a sludge-like quality to the experience, but it was not attracting me to the Dark Side, or any side. Frankly, for more than 2 1/2 years I've had what could be called very poor quality meditation experiences. No Bliss Ananda ever, and deep meditation only rarely. That's really why I haven't meditated longer than a half hour for quite awhile. Motivation.

The Daimon

When I returned from the trance and gave my usual thank-yous to the icons on the wall of my sacred space, I had a really strong reaction to Black Eagle, my daimon, and almost immediately went back into trance, but I came out of it after a few seconds. Then a powerful thought occurred to me: "The daimon is the key."

The evolution of the human may be in the direction of the daimon. When Socrates was in a trance he spoke to his daimon, and his daimon spoke to him and told him whenever he was about to do something foolish. For a long time, I've thought about the Stoics of antiquity in their acceptance of the daimon as a real entity.

The daimon answers the problem of an impersonal deity, one that is too distant even though it is within each of us as a spark of the divine. We don't need to believe in Plato's demiurge if we have a

daimon looking out for us individually and collectively as a species. Is that how we got here? Is the daimon our guide to evolution? Are we related to them in any way? If our God is Nature, the entire universe, then it is so big, so vast, its ways and level of understanding is so far beyond us that it's a creative power that is incomprehensible. But, a daimon, an individual daimon we can relate to.

If we could establish the existence and validity for the early Stoic's belief in daimones, then we would have a spiritual dimension to our philosophy to tell the world about. How do I do this? How do I contact my daimon, or any daimon, to prove its existence—to me as well as to others? Perhaps the dream and trance actually led me to a contemplation of the daimon, but I don't know. I'm still trying to understand, what is the Great Insight of this dream-trance?

Later. This was a strange experience. The entire event was more than two hours in length from the end of the dream to the end of the trance. As in the case of Great Insight #4, Trance 101, nothing happened. Apart from the dream imagery at the outset, there was neither a vision nor an obvious message being communicated. And with that, I have to point out a problem that comes up time and again. I'm not consciously searching for these specific experiences. Invariably, *they come to me*. That said, who is and where is the *they* that comes and communicates with me? That these insights happen there can be no doubt (except by those who have never had one). They happen.

Using Occam's Razor, I have focused on the subconscious as the source. We know something of the creativity and exceptional abilities of the subconscious mind and intelligence that we carry around with us 24 hours a day. This is the most likely source. To search *beyond* the subconscious for the who or what that enters into one's meditation or trance, Friar Occam would say is one step too far. I agree. What other option have I? Am I supposed to believe in angels or spirit guides from some kind of spirit world beyond our understanding?

Be that as it may, I still allow myself to consider adding another element to my subconscious and me, Empty Sky. This was somehow given to me to understand, and I would be remiss in ignoring or dismissing the experience out of hand. Otherwise, what was the point of all those years of meditation? To illustrate what I mean I show the smallest bracket as the individual consciousness; the second bracket as the individual's subconscious; and, the largest bracket as the Empty Sky, GI #1.



Once I created the connection, I had to decide on directionality. After some thought, I decided the flow of communication in thought or form would flow in both directions. It has to in order for the parts to function as they do in the real world. The individual consciousness informs the subconscious which is retained by that intelligence and given back in the form of memory, intuition, and creative leaps of understanding. While the subconscious is communicating with the conscious it is in the same manner searching for *something* from Empty Sky that it can bring to the individual's conscious mind. How Empty Sky knows what is needed takes another step. In other words, does the subconscious simply search and retrieve what information is hanging there in some kind of Akashic Field; or, is there

some form of communication between the subconscious and the Field? Either way, we still may have solved one of the great conundrums of all time: *how it is possible to have a personal and impersonal god at the same time*. The subconscious, then, becomes the intercessor and the key. More work needed here.

Great Insight #7: Sudden Thought:

“Parabolic Proof for the Transcendence of God”

31 OCT 16: 0630 hours at about 10 minutes into meditation:

Without any thought on this subject beforehand, the realization came to me that the human body parts, right down to the individual cell, change so that all of the physical body is completely renewed every seven years. Physically, I am a completely different person every 7 years, and yet I am the same person. I am still me. I still have the continuation of my consciousness through all these changes. I transcend my physical body in the same or similar way that God could transcend it's physical body.

This is not a new thought for me, but what followed is. In Stoic cosmology, the Active principle remains while the Passive principle is changing, even as it burns away at the end of its life cycle, a process the early Stoics called *ekpyrosis*. Thus, God and I are greater than the sum of our parts, and God is *both* immanent and transcendent.

When this thought came to me I wrote it down and was then flooded with an extended period of feeling joy, love, and gratitude so intense that I felt as if I could weep. After about 10-15 minutes, that fullness of feeling subsided, and I felt only exhaustion. Thankful, but deeply tired.

Commentary

In going over the physical time surrounding these Great Insights I notice that I often experienced physical issues. I'm reminded of something I read by Bruno Borchert in his book, *The History and Challenge of Mysticism* (Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1994, p. 14). He said, “Many mystics have continually complained about poor health....fainting fits, attacks of cramps, phobias, depressions—it would be possible to draw up a whole list of symptoms out of the lives of mystics....”

Even after I was cured of Lone Atrial Fibrillation, which most commonly began with a feeling of fainting and falling, I had other physical problems that always intensified around the time—before, during, and/or after—the Great Insight. Even at a time when I was in my peak training condition of mountain climbing this was true. In fact, after Great Insight #6, Dream Trance: Evolution, I found I was no longer able to sit in any meditation position on the floor. After more than 30 years I was only able to continue meditation by sitting in a chair. This was a difficult, almost impossible adjustment for me, and it took a long time for me to make my peace with it. I still have dreams of sitting in the Lotus position on the floor, but my old bones won't have it.

Later. Stoics can disagree on whether their god is both immanent and transcendent, but I know which side of the disagreement I'm on. Both. If Pneuma, the Active Principle, can exist independently of gross matter, the Passive Principle, then the Stoic god can be transcendent. If all physical existence is burned away in the cycle of *ekpyrosis*, leaving the Active Principle to exist alone at the end and beginning of the new cycle, then God—aka, Pneuma, the Active principle, and the Logos fire—is clearly transcendent. Can this be the extreme point of heat just before the Big Bang?

One must ask: is this a true version of reality? Mythologically, to a Stoic, it is. Can it be proved or disproved? No. It doesn't need to be. It's a story. It's a story told by ancient Stoics. I respect both the philosopher who told the story and the story they told. I've never heard a better one.

Three times in my life I have been “told or shown” that there is something greater than my self and this human point of view. The first was when I was in Army Infantry Officer School at Fort Benning, Georgia. I was actually making spaghetti on a Friday evening at the end of a hard week of training in the autumn of 1977. The thought came to me so strongly and without warning or context that I was stunned. I remember everything about that moment even now, forty years later, and I can see the details of that room even now as if it is still happening. Without preface or preamble, the thought came to me that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” And immediately after thinking that thought another thought came to me that this is a proof for the existence of God.

Of course, any academic philosopher can tear this “proof” to shreds with the observation that a pile of rubble is still a pile of rubble, no more or less, and any exception to a proof disproves the proof. That's what my mentor, Keith Campbell answered when I asked him about it many years later. I thought he was wrong at the time, and still do, but I didn't say anything then. I didn't argue that even a pile of rubble has some greater context that changes it's meaning according to its place in space and time, but even then I knew better than to argue with intellectual geniuses about such things.

- The second time came 25 years later in the Great Insight #1, but that is covered in the commentary on the Empty Sky.
- The third time came 14 years later when I had Great Insight #7, that clearly ordained the Parabolic Proof for the Transcendence of God.”

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Chapter 17: Discourse on the Mystical Experience

I'm done. I really don't want to do this anymore. Many times I think I have wasted more than 30 years of my most precious time, free time, in the pursuit of enlightenment. Even after all these years I don't feel enlightened. I have had some interesting experiences, yes, but it matters less than it used to, and I'm tired of the tedium of meditation. Ever since the experience of Gravitata Ananda, Great Insight #5, I rarely have joy ananda or even mild euphoria in my practice, and without that motivation it's all just cold silence. How many more years before I have another insight of any value? Will it take ten years as it did between Great Insights #2 and #3. If so, then I'll probably be dead. If I'm dead before I have my next insight, then I won't need it anyway, because either my consciousness will continue beyond the grave and I will know what's going on, or my consciousness will die with my body and I will be entirely without concern.

A disgruntled mystic. I don't like to call myself a mystic any more than I liked to call myself an artist back when I was trying to be an artist. It seems pretentious and, frankly, wrong. Isn't a mystic supposed to be something special? I don't feel special. Most of the time I'm grateful for the Great Insights I have had, but they haven't made me in any way special. Or, if they have, I'm not aware of it. Would I recommend others do what I have done? Well, that's too personal. I can't know if someone is going to be more successful than I have been at seeking enlightenment. Some seem to have a real talent for this sort of thing, and I don't feel like I do. So many years. So much effort. And I haven't even had the one mystical experience that seems to be universal among those who make this claim. I have never really had the experience of a collapse of the object/subject continuum. There are many who claim this experience just came to them without warning or effort, and certainly without the discipline of meditation. I guess the Big One could happen any day now, but it may never happen.

Well, it was my nature, and I did what I could with it. Now, I'm 71-years-old, and it seems too late to change. I mean, if I had some assurance that I could live another 20 years, then, maybe. My growing discontent is not unlike another quote by Bruno Borchert in his book, *The History and Challenge of Mysticism* (Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1994, pp. 12, 14). He said, "Some [mystics] have been so baffled they decide to opt for the hard reality of life and to abandon mysticism. A well-known example is Ionesco... [who] now has an enormous appetite to life and an ardent desire to satisfy all his senses. Others have ended their lives because they could no longer stand the strain. Failures are hardly ever described... [they] are not felt to be worth recording for posterity....A mystical experience is therefore no guarantee of a joyful and peaceful life. Even less does it guarantee a long and healthy life."

I don't want to sound like I'm complaining; I'm just tired. Once again, as I have so many times before, I wonder if I should just quit. It's been 33 years. I gave it my best shot, and this is what I got. Nothing great, but then I never expected to become a great spiritual master. It's the same with an artist or musician or scientist. Not everyone can be a Michelangelo or Bach or Isaac Newton. Most of us are consigned to slog along in the trenches all our lives without ever knowing greatness. I don't consider such a life a failure. Doing the best one can with the talent one is given is enough. For those of us who

are donkeys and never become Triple Crown race horses there's always the joy of anonymity as one consolation. Can you imagine people staring at you and whispering behind their hands everywhere you go?

I don't lack for comfort or love. I have both in as much measure as I can ever want or need. If I wanted more *things* I would have also wanted to be busy all the time, seeking and grasping for more and more. But, really, I prefer to sit still and explore the world inside. The older I get the less I care about all the stuff I'm supposed to desire. Perhaps it's true, as Marcus Aurelius said, that one can find happiness even in a palace, but why would one voluntarily take on such a burden? I can be thankful that it was not my destiny and duty. Marcus often wished he could be what I am, a Stoic philosopher. I have something the most powerful man in the world once wanted and couldn't have: peace and contentment in a cottage far from those who want you dead so they can have your job.

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When I was a toddler I was playing beside a creek that went by the side of my grandfather's house in College Place, Washington. My deaf aunt was knitting and babysitting me at the time, but I only know this because I learned of it later. I have no memory of the event. Before long, my aunt noticed I was standing very still and looking intently in the creek water as it flowed by. In a moment or two I fell head first into the water. She pulled me out, wiped me off, changed my clothes, and took me back to the creek. I immediately returned to the same location, stood there staring intently into the water, and fell flat on my face again. The rest of the day was spent inside.

When I was a few years older and self-conscious, my family lived in Oregon farm country. There was an unmarked forest nearby, a wild and uncivilized place, and I spent all my free time there. As far as I know, my older brother never spent a minute in those woods. He preferred to play with the other boys in our village. As soon as I went into the woods I took off my shoes and most of my clothes and wandered around alone. Sometimes my dog came along. I never did anything constructive. I wasn't a budding biologist or botanist. It never occurred to me that I should be worried about wild animals even though I was far enough into the woods that if I had encountered a bear or mountain lion no one would have heard me scream. My sister called me "Nature Boy."

As soon as I achieved puberty I discovered there was another gender on the planet. As soon as I went to secondary school, a parochial academy in California, it was discovered that I had a good singing voice, and I never went into the woods again. I didn't have time. I was a soloist singing religious music either alone or with a choir, and I performed every weekend, usually several times every weekend. Between the music and my girlfriends I didn't study very much. And that's how my life began. I had never heard of enlightenment, or mystical experiences, or Satori, and it was years before the Beatles were invented and went to India, so no one I knew had heard of such things either.

Aptitude may be as important as attitude, but they are generally related. There are many ways to gauge one's intelligence. Some are geniuses at one thing and some at another. Some are polymaths and exceptional at many things. I *may* have an aptitude for spiritual studies of the mystical sort, but more importantly I have determination and perseverance. Francis Crick had an IQ of 116, hardly

impressive and about 30 points below the genius bar, but he was able to go on and get a Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Most geniuses never go so far. I don't claim to have any special talents or aptitude for this work other than determination and perseverance.

I am not psychic. I have no marked or marketable spiritual gifts, and I have had only a handful of spontaneous experiences of the paranormal kind that would suggest I am in any way a special person. I may have an above average inclination or curiosity about pursuing a path to enlightenment, but at the same time I have always been profoundly skeptical about everything relating to such a pursuit. As I've already said, I have a visceral aversion to gurus of any kind and have always had difficulty with being told what to do unless there was a clear and reasonable explanation for what was expected. And even at that, I do not take kindly to being bossed. I'm *inner* directed. I've never had a guru for my spiritual practices, because I've never looked for one. It may be that it's taken me ten times as long to experience Great Insights precisely because I won't take spiritual direction from others. Gautama the Buddha had the same problem, apparently, but that's where the comparison ends. He was gifted.

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Part Four: The Journey



Black Eagle of the Assiniboin tribe, by Edward Curtis, 1908

Chapter 18: The Last Time I Drove to LA

24 MAR 17: I was going to be 72 years old in a couple of weeks. I was driving up from San Diego to a Shaman Workshop in Topanga Canyon, north Los Angeles, and I was driving alone. Traffic was slow, really slow, but what did I expect on a Friday afternoon? I left my house in La Mesa at noon. I was thirsty when I left the house, but I drank nothing before I left and drank nothing the whole way. This was my normal procedure for driving through Prostate Hell. Even though I stopped and peed (almost nothing) at the Camp Pendleton rest area on the border between San Diego and Orange County I knew I was going to be in trouble before I got to my destination. We were crawling.

It was only 150 miles to my destination, but it took five hours to get to there. I had rented a room in Woodland Hills, an LA suburb located just north of Topanga Canyon. I averaged 30 miles an hour—all freeway miles. But an additional problem that came with five hours of stop-and-go, mostly stop, was the inevitable need to pee. At the age of my prostate, I can go only so long between toilet breaks, and LA freeways are impossibly difficult for the out-of-towner to know which exit to take to find relief. There are no public rest areas through LA, at all, and for miles and miles it's almost impossible to decipher what lies beyond the freeway exits. Am I going into a ghetto? Are there any gas stations or fast food joints with restrooms here? How about here? I've driven through LA many times, and every time I suffer. Every time.

By the time the need to pee had become a crisis I vowed to take the next exit—regardless of what lay beyond. Twenty minutes later I exited on Indiana Street. There was an ARCO station right at the end of the off ramp. I suddenly felt lucky. I pulled in to the station but was unable to stop because there were so many cars I couldn't figure out how to even get in line. Driving a Prius I didn't really need any gas, but I figured I could put \$5 in and go use the restroom. There were no parking places, and everyone seemed to be in a hurry, and there were bars and heavy-gauge wire mesh on all the doors and windows, and I decided to take my chances a little further on. The only problem was, this exit went directly into a residential area. I needed junk food businesses not houses. For \$1 you can buy a tall cup of iced tea at MacDonal'd's and use their restroom. Of course, I couldn't drink the tea. That would make me need to pee again. I decided to turn right on a busy street and just keep driving until I found something.

In two or three blocks I saw some businesses. I pulled into an Auto Zone auto parts store and got the last parking space out front. I figured I would buy something, anything, and at this point I was willing to buy a couple of quarts of oil, anything, if I could use their restroom. I went up to a young Hispanic clerk standing on a ladder stocking a shelf. I asked if I could use their restroom. "Sorry, it's closed for repairs," she said.

I quickly exited and saw a Wells Fargo bank across the street. I ran through the traffic, couldn't wait at a crosswalk, and went inside. I knew it was a long shot, but I'd had the mortgage on my house with Wells Fargo for twenty years, and that had to count for something. I asked the Security Guard at the

entrance. He referred me to the manager who was standing in the middle of the bank helping a customer. He was finally free, and I told him I was a long term, Wells Fargo customer, and I was desperate to use their restroom. He said he was sorry but the toilet was for employees only. The only restroom was behind the steel enclosed teller cages, and he couldn't let me in there.

I smacked my forehead with both hands, something I've only seen on TV and in the movies, and ran out. The Security Guard followed me to the sidewalk. His name tag said his name was Romero, and he had heard me almost beg the manager for the use of the restroom. He said there was a small public park 2-3 blocks down the street and there was a public toilet there. I thanked him, and only then did I realized everyone I had seen since taking the Indiana street exit was Hispanic. It didn't matter by then, and I ran in the direction he pointed. I could have run right past the park. It about the size of a large city block with a couple of old buildings, a couple of trees, dirt grounds, and one set of monkey bars. An old man was sitting on a plastic chair in the shade of one building. I asked him if there was a restroom in one of the buildings He waived me away. I tried it in Spanish. He waived me away again, so I went up to a boy about 11 or 12 and asked him. He pointed to one end of the building, and I saw the sign. I peed with one eye on the urinal and one eye looking over my shoulder.

On the way back, feeling much better and walking much slower, about two blocks from the Auto Zone store where I was still parked I saw an LA Police Department cruiser blocking my path on the sidewalk. The doors of the cruiser were open and both cops were standing there looking to my right. I walked around it and saw three other LAPD cruisers maybe twenty feet away. All cruisers had their lights flashing and the officers were standing behind their open doors. One Hispanic officer had his service revolver drawn and was aiming at an open door. I lingered for a moment, then remembered my own car parked not far away, or at least I hoped it was still parked not far away, and I quickened my pace back to where I left it. In a few minutes I was back on the freeway in Friday afternoon traffic.

It was a two-day workshop. I went the first day, and on the morning of the second day I drove home. Why? It cost a lot of money, the workshop did, but I couldn't continue. Part of it was the stress of thinking about the drive home that night through LA on a Sunday evening in the dark when everyone is hurrying to get home after the weekend. A nightmare. Another Prostate Hell nightmare. Part of it was that I knew without a doubt that I was not a healer. The whole medical aspect of shamanism felt entirely alien to me. I didn't really believe in it, and even if I could account for some healing via the placebo effect I would first need to find patients who believed in shamanic healing in order for the placebo to work. Since it appeared that shamanism was predominantly about healing I didn't want to continue. This workshop was my foundational introduction to shamanic *healing*, and in the middle of it came the strong realization I didn't want to be a healer. That's not who I am.

I liked journeying. I wanted to journey, but I wanted to journey for the information I could get from the spirit world, the cosmology aspect of shamanism. There was another thing. I already knew how to journey. I learned that in my first workshop, and that's all I wanted to do. I have always been a DIY kind of guy, and it seemed to me that if there was any validity to this shamanism business I could learn it on my own. After all, I taught myself hypnotism when I wanted to investigate the validity of past life regression. Schools and teachers are great when they're convenient and affordable, but sometimes it's necessary to take matters into one's own hands.

Chapter 19: Black Eagle

For many years I've had fantasies about living in a monastery. I may have conjured up this fantasy as a way of getting through the work day of a wage slave. I define a wage slave as one who only works at a job because he needs the money to survive. Otherwise, he detests or is coldly indifferent to the work, the boss, and the people with whom he must associate all day. My alternate identity as a monk remained a fantasy, because there was no religion I respected enough to want to submerge my identity in their belief system.

Then, I discovered that the Stoics actually invented the monastery idea in ancient Rome, which they called a monasterium. Their monasteriums may have only been retreats for single Stoics to deeply ponder life's meaning, a monastery of one, but we don't know. For many years I worked on daily schedules and a monasterium diet even as I continued the meditations I had begun decades earlier. I had 4-day practice retreats in my own home where I could refine my ideas. Finally, just a few weeks ago as of this writing, I decided my monasterium needed a name, and I called it Black Eagle Monasterium.

So, who is Black Eagle? To answer that question we have to go back to the early 20^h century. On the way we need to stop a moment in the Sculpture Department at the University of Oregon in May of 1980. (I'm going to all this trouble because Black Eagle will come up time and again as we proceed.) As part of my graduate thesis, I submitted five sculpture pieces to be exhibited at the Master of Fine Arts Graduate Student Show. One of the pieces was a 89 cm construction of plastic, wood, leather, and metal. It was almost entirely black, and it's name was "Shield of Black Eagle."

The shield represented the name I gave myself in honor of Plains Indian cosmology. I first learned of the Lakota Sioux cosmology years earlier when I read *Black Elk Speaks*, and that's when I combined the Bear and the Eagle. The symbolic color of the bear was black, and it represented the warrior. The symbolic color of the eagle was white, and it represented one with far-seeing vision. I didn't know if it was permissible to combine the two, but I did it anyway and gave myself the Indian name, Black Eagle. I knew this about myself, my alternate identity, and never doubted it, but I never told anyone.

From graduate school in 1980 until the 22nd of February 2017 (I marked the date) I had never heard of another Black Eagle. In fact, I had never heard of a Black Eagle other than myself, *ever*. Then on that propitious day, my wife Amielle sent me an Internet file of 20 or so old photographs of Native Americans by Edward S. Curtis. Without much interest I hastily skimmed through them, then stopped suddenly at one photo of an old man standing proudly, almost defiantly straight, as he looked into the camera lens. I read the photo caption. His name was Black Eagle.

This was a real Indian of the Assiniboine Tribe located at Fort Belknap, Montana. (Google it.) The date of the picture was 1908, and that means this old Indian had lived much of his early life as a hunter-gatherer, a buffalo hunter, with little knowledge of the white man and his civilization. He was one of

the last of that great people indigenous to this continent who were systematically eradicated in so many ways it could and should be called the American holocaust. He had also survived the great famine of 1889-90 when 300 members of his tribe starved to death because the white man had killed off nearly all the great buffalo herds the native inhabitants had depended on for thousands of years.

As I looked closely at the picture, my very first thought came with a feeling of great attraction, and I wondered, "Is this me in a prior life?" When I occasionally find the idea of reincarnation credible there has never been any question about what I was in my previous life. I've always known I was an Indian. Many children of my generation had that intuition. I came into this world with a love for the Native American and a hatred for the white man. My earliest memories as a child when I went to bed at night was to fantasize about running away with Indians, and while they hid in a cave I would stand at the entrance to the cave behind a rock and shoot the white people one at a time as they walked into my trap. And then I fell asleep. I did this every night for a long time, until I finally grew out of it and *became* a "white man."

A few days after discovering the real Black Eagle, my wife thought I might be interested in Roger Walsh's book, *The Spirit of Shamanism*. Her mother had picked it up at a used book store in Florida and gave it to her for something to read on the plane trip back to California. She whipped through it in a couple of hours; it took me a couple of weeks. I wasn't interested in reading it at first, but as usual I looked to see the qualifications of the author. I was more impressed with his credentials than I was in his subject. (He has both M.D. and Ph.D. Degrees from good universities and is professor of psychiatry, philosophy, and anthropology at the University of California, Irvine.) I rather reluctantly started reading and couldn't put it down. I took notes as I went.

I read numerous reference Walsh made to another anthropologist, a Michael Harner, who he obviously respected. He also positively described the international organization Harner had created, the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, and discussed his workshops and their results. I Googled Michael Harner and discovered a Core Shamanic Drumming workshop would be here in San Diego in about two weeks. I had never taken what I considered a New Age workshop before, thought they were always overpriced, but I had come into a few dollars recently, and I signed up.

Some people think more than one coincidence is not a coincidence. It was necessary to give some background into the story of Black Eagle, because from the discovery of the *real* Black Eagle to my initiation as a shaman happened so fast that before I knew it my life had changed. My weariness with the pursuit of mystical experience in my meditation practice thankfully ended, and after 33 years I was renewed by a completely new direction, one that I would not have even conceived a month earlier. The discovery of Black Eagle began this radical transformation, and as a character he will return again and again in the journeying journal that follows. But first, for those who know as little about shamans and their worlds as I did, it's important to know something of what they have known for at least 30,000 years.

* * * *

Chapter 20: Three Worlds

I've read four books as background to the "Three Worlds" of the shaman. To save time, I'm going to give you the quick-and-dirty version of the three worlds. Most of the information and all of the quotations in this introduction are from these four books. One small idea is my own, and it has nothing to do with traditional shamanic notions. I will clearly identify what that is when we get to it. Regarding these three worlds it's essential to know something about them before we investigate the actual journeys we will be taking. For those who want more depth than can be included here, reading the following books are highly recommended:

- Walsh, Roger, *The Spirit of Shamanism* (Tarcher, 1990)
- Harner, Michael, *The Way of the Shaman* (HarperOne, 1980, 1990)
- Harner, Michael, *Cave and Cosmos* (North Atlantic, 2013)
- Castenada, Carlos, *The teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (Washington Square Press of Pocket Books, 1968)

Shamanism is at least 30,000 years old, according to anthropologists' best guesstimate, and it has been practiced in virtually every culture in the world. From Australia to Siberia the shaman was the principle spiritual leader and healer of his or her community. Yes, the shaman is often a woman. Evidence of shamanic practice can be seen on rock paintings, ranging from crude to sublime. Even today, there are pockets of indigenous and pre-agrarian people who preserve shamanic tradition, but the great majority of them were killed by the dominant religions of the world, especially the Abrahamic faiths. They were not about to allow these pagan witch doctors with their Satanic mumbo-jumbo access to the villagers' souls.

Although this practice goes by many names according to the language of the local people, the term shaman (SHAW-maan) has generally been agreed upon as the proper way to refer to those who practiced this profession. The word comes to us from the word *saman* used by Tungus people of Siberia, and for them it means one who is excited, moved or raised. For 30,000 years, and probably more, shamans healed the sick, found food for the hungry tribe, studied herbs, interceded with divine spirits, and were the visionaries of their day. Some researchers have tried to discover how such a phenomenon as the shaman could have arisen all over the world without a common source or origin, but we don't know. As an oral tradition its earliest beginnings are simply unknown.

Michael Harner had the best definition of a shaman I have seen. In *The Way of the Shaman*, he writes, "A shaman is a man or woman who enters an altered state of consciousness—at will—to contact and utilize an ordinarily hidden reality in order to acquire knowledge, power, and to help other persons. The shaman has at least one, and usually more 'spirits' in his personal service." He goes on to say that the shaman's enlightenment is meant literally. That is, he or she brings light to the cosmic darkness that permeates much of our lives. Harner also suggests that the term *enlightenment* may have originated as a description of the wisdom of the shaman.

Shamanic practices differed from region to region, but there were certain universal themes. Anthropologists such as Roger Walsh and Michael Harner, et al, devoted their professional lives to identifying and confirming the most common themes. Chief among them is the shaman's journey to the spirit world, but when we refer to three different worlds we also have to take into account the one in which we currently live. There is an upper world, a spirit world with many levels or layer; a middle world, the material world, our familiar world in which we currently live; and, there is a lower world, also a spirit world and also a place with more than one level. All three of these worlds are apparently linked by a central axis, an *axis mundi*. For the three worlds that follow I will first explain how we get there, then describe briefly what the shaman finds upon arrival.

Upper World and The Teacher

For the shaman's tribespeople this multilayered cosmos is a belief, a myth, and an article of faith. For the shamans it is a direct experience. They alone traverse these layers and turn a cosmology into a personal road map.

Michael Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, p. 115

I was looking into graduate school, driving in the Willamette Valley from Portland, Oregon, to Eugene, home of the University of Oregon. Maybe 30 miles north of Eugene where there are endless acres of crop fields on both sides of the highway I saw an enormous rainbow. There was a typical spring drizzle at the time, and the rainbow started in the middle of a field to my left and ended—on the driver's floor of the car around my feet. It was and is the only time I actually saw the so-called pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It wasn't gold, but it was a brilliant golden light that sparkled and glowed from my knees to my feet on the floor around the foot pedals. It really happened. I had a passenger that can verify this event. It lasted several minutes, then the rainbow moved away.

I only tell that story to emphasize what we do when going to the upper world. We look for a place in our memory, or one that exists right here and now that is a high point physically and emotionally in our life. It may be the top of a rainbow or even the roof of one's house if the terrain where we live is flat. It could be a tree. Any high place that has some significance in our life now or in the past. It may no longer exist. That's OK. The rainbow will not stay long and the tree may have been cut down. That's OK. It's what we remember that we can visualize in our mind's eye clearly and go there to enter the UpperWorld (UW). I no longer use the top of the rainbow I saw in the Willamette Valley that day. In both the UW and LowerWorld (LW) we can change the location to another place if it proves to be more fitting.

Before we journey to our chosen high place we need a vehicle to help us get there. We do this with shamanic drumming. We can either buy and listen to a drumming CD or do the drumming ourselves. I don't know of anyone else that does their own drumming, but there are probably many. I just don't know them. In the shamanic worlds there is great flexibility, and whatever works is right. I do my own drumming with a 16" Remo "buffalo drum," and accompanying stick, for which I paid about \$40 as of this writing. We drum at about 200 beats per minute, but I've never counted mine. I've heard other shamans drum enough to have an intuitive feel for it. There are neurological studies on the effects of

drumming in the brain that have found there is a kind of altered consciousness that takes place. That's what we're looking for.

The journeying takes place in absolute darkness. Often shamans work at night, but if it's in the daytime a bandanna or scarf may be used to cover the eyes. I just shut my eyes. I almost always journey early in the morning. Once we have our drumming rhythm going and our vision is black we travel in our mind's eye to the top of whatever significant high point we are using to gain entrance to the UW. Then, we have to enter it. That can be done by simply imagining a barrier, a thin membrane separating the worlds, which we then push ourselves through. It may help to think of this barrier as a cloud layer, or it could be invisible on a bright sunny day. More importantly we *imagine* passing through a barrier, one that is easily permeable, and we're there. We may use imaginary constructs if needed. Once I reach my current ascension point I use an imaginary ladder that I climb to and through the barrier. For me, the membrane feels slightly damp as I go through.

When we are on the first level we begin our search for a Teacher. The UpperWorld is where we find a teacher, but whether we are in the UW or the LW we look for a "Compassionate Helper." This is an important concept for both the UW and LW, because in these two worlds among all the people, plants, and animals we meet can be found compassionate helpers. The most important thing to remember after actually getting here in UW is intentionality. Our *intention* is paramount. If our intention is pure, any naive stumbling will be overlooked by the pure life beings of UW and LW.

Now, we look for a Teacher. But, before actually traveling to the UW it's important to know exactly the question we have for our teacher once he or she is found. We find this being by simply looking and asking for them. We don't need to be concerned if visualizing is difficult. We may see nothing, or all the images we do see may be faint and fleeting. Analytical left brain thinkers often have trouble, apparently, and I often did. Michael Harner mentions one student of his that saw virtually nothing for eight months, but he kept at it, and suddenly it all just flowed. There seems to be an effort zone located between not trying and trying too hard where the visualization is most active and detailed.

Why would a so-called "compassionate helper" even bother to come when we call? The beings of these worlds once lived in the world we occupy, Middle World, usually many times, and they know just how difficult life here can be. They want to help, and because they are highly evolved beings they are understanding, "compassionate." When we first look for a teacher in the UW we don't know who or what to expect. When we see people (usually it's people in the UW), we simply go up to them and ask, "Are you my teacher?" If they *are* our teacher they will say so; if not, they will likely say no or shake their head or just look away. If we have trouble seeing on the first level we can go to the next level and search there (that's where the imaginary ladder comes in handy). We keep going up level after level until we find someone who will be our teacher, then we ask our question. The teacher may answer with words or gestures or symbols. Most of the time I don't see anyone's lips moving, the words just come to me telepathically. The journeyer always thanks their teacher when they have received the answer.

Middle World and Non-Ordinary Reality

We live in MiddleWorld right now. The material world *is* the Middle World (MW). According to shamans, there is a Non-Ordinary Reality (NOR) associated with MW. Many contemporary Western shamans, at least those who studied with the Harner Foundation, don't go there. The NOR is a very dangerous place to be. As you know, life in our *ordinary* reality can be difficult and dangerous, and the NOR is no different. Heraclitus was the first to point out that war was king and father of us all. That's what the continua that makes up life is all about. To experience our material world we must live on a continuum between a polarity of opposites – hot and cold, hard and soft, hunger and plenty. Again, Heraclitus, “Homer was wrong in saying, 'Would that strife might perish from among gods and men!' He did not see that he was praying for the destruction of the universe (frag. 42, Burnet trans.)”

MiddleWorld Non-Ordinary Reality is the world of the sorcerer, the one who is seeking power and control in the Ordinary Reality of MW. The shaman seeks enlightenment and healing for his or her people; the sorcerer seeks power, mostly for themselves. Neither Walsh nor Harner spend much time describing the NOR and what goes on there. The best source I know is Carlos Castenada's work, *The Teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui Way of Knowledge*. This is where the shaman, really the sorcerer, confronts danger, often extreme danger, from both the NOR spirit beings and from the other antagonistic sorcerer's of MW. The beings of the NOR are *not* always compassionate helpers, and anyone who explores the NOR without a guide is a fool. Carlos Castenada had Don Juan, but even with his careful tutelage Carlos was often in great difficulty and stress. This is the world of ghosts and other disgruntled spirits who are unfit or unready to go on to UW or LW.

My own hypothesis, based upon my years of work with the mystical is that there are two forms of NOR in the MW. There is the sorcerer's world of seeking power in the MW and there is the mystic's world of seeking enlightenment. My hypothesis is tentative and requires more careful thought and analysis, but my own experience tells me the world of the mystic is more closely related to MiddleWorld cosmology than either the UW or LW of the shaman. There's overlap, of course, just as there is overlap between the UW and LW. There is very little work done in this kind of comparison, because, as Walsh says, it's quite rare to find anyone who is experienced in both the mystic and shamanic disciplines. The Great Insights I have had in my NOR suggests MW cosmology, not the Spirit Worlds of UW or LW.

Another conclusion I have come to, after checking with a couple of other shamans, is that the MW trance *feels* different from what one experiences in the Spirit World. Most people don't know what it means to be in a trance because they've never had one – or, if they ever did they didn't realize when it happened. In my MW Non-ordinary Reality (NOR) trance there would be no doubt, no question whatsoever. It was profound, deep, and strong. The UW and LW trance is light. In the MW trance I experienced going *through* the mountain. Dark—almost in a state of paralysis. By comparison, in the Spirit World you are flying *over* the mountain. I've checked the shaman trance with a couple of shamans I know. Neither of them knew about MW trance, but both agreed that the trance in UW and LW is light, not dark.

Lower World and Power Animals

I had a really hard time finding my descent location into the LowerWorld (LW). I didn't have a favorite tree with a knothole, I didn't play in caves as a child, and I didn't feel any place was right for quite awhile. My journeying teacher said to not worry about it—I could simply use my imagination to create whatever was missing. For example, I had a favorite bay in Maui, Hawaii, I had been to several times for snorkeling. There were many tropical fish to see, and there were underwater altars of volcanic rock that seemed like pedestals of great power. I remembered it in quite a lot of detail, but in mentally scanning the sandy floor I didn't remember seeing any way to descend.

My teacher said to simply *imagine* a hole in the ocean floor and go down it. That worked for awhile, but I was not content with that solution and kept looking for another location. I found it at last and have used it ever since. Once we find our favorite place to ascend or descend we will go back to it every time. It becomes as much a part of the journey as drumming. A shaman should avoid revealing the actual locations he or she commonly use. There are a few rules like this. Another one is that no one should ever touch a shaman's drum, rattles, or other equipment. Also, we must be careful about discussing our personal Power Animal, because we weaken its power. (I am also taking a risk in exposing my journey journal notes, but I accept that risk.) I don't question most of these rules because they intuitively seem correct.

Once our eyes are covered and closed, the drumming begins. When we see our location of descent we are ready to begin. Again, we actively visualize beginning the journey, then allow it to unfold as the drumming carries us along. We go down whatever is part of our means of travel away from MW. It may be a mining shaft or a ground squirrel hole, and it may be a quick descent or more gradual. Either way we will suddenly come “out” and into a place we recognize; or, it may be one where we have never been. As soon as we have a chance to look around we will likely see an animal or animals nearby. We ask in the same way we asked in the UW, but instead of asking for a teacher we may ask for a Compassionate Helper (CW). We have a question carefully prepared beforehand, and until we are more experienced it's best to go down with only one question. The CW may not communicate with language, using gestures or symbols, and if we ask more than one question it can be difficult to sort out the answers.

I want to emphasize the fact that there is nothing to fear in LowerWorld. Despite the fears of the Abrahamic faiths and other religions where hell is a real place somewhere below us. It's not LW. We can get rid of that fear. There are only pure life forms here, compassionate helpers that can assist us in our struggle with life in MiddleWorld. It's the MW that is the scary place, and that's where we of the living are functioning every day. Where we are right now is what many of the spirit worlds may consider a kind of hell. Finally, the fact that LW is the realm where Power Animals are most likely to be found is also something to look forward to, not dread.

The Power Animal is a wild animal—one who lives in and by nature. It is not a domesticated animal that lives on our farms by human husbandry. However, some may be part of both realities, such as goats, rams, and wild horses. Usually it's going to be lions, bears, buffalo, wolves, and porpoise in LW. But, and this is a very important thing we learn, no matter what animal we find there it will be a

powerful animal. Even if it is a butterfly it will be a living form of great power. But, there is nothing to fear. Power Animals *want* to help. These are pure life forms, and they do not hold MW grudges.

A buffalo will not blame me, a white man, for the wanton slaughter that practically brought their species to extinction in the American West. The same is true for a teacher. As a descendant of white American settlers I have nothing to fear from meeting a Native American. They not only want to help they also want to help us restore shamanic practices in our contemporary world. When we have said our thank-yous, it is time to go. I intuitively know when it's time leave. I just feel it.

Some shamans today use a tape recorder to describe what they are seeing or not seeing, because the record can be more detailed and accurate. I don't record my journeys; I keep a written journal in which I write what transpired as soon as I return and open my eyes. I trust that the most important information will be the strongest in my memory. But, I also write down anything I remember later whenever I remember it. Sometimes it's a day or more later. You will see what I mean, because that's what we are doing next.

* *

Before we begin with the record of my journeys, it's important to briefly discuss a matter that may come up again and again in the reader's mind, schizophrenia. Modern western culture has been quick to suggest that shamanic journeying was a form of schizophrenia and thereby dismiss it as some foolishness of primitive minds trying to adapt to the harsh conditions of a threatening world. The shaman *cannot* be compared to the schizophrenic for two reasons: (1) the shaman has disciplined control and is/was (2) a productive member of his or her society. Of course, there are still those who would like to view all experiences of non-ordinary reality as a form of insanity. And, those who stubbornly persist in such a view are seldom swayed by evidence to the contrary.

After we can reasonably dismiss schizophrenia as an explanation for the shamanic journey, we still have another comparison to make, the mystical experience. There are many forms of mysticism, but the two most commonly associated with that experience are those of the yogi and Buddhist monk. These two differ from each other in that the yogi practices concentration while the Buddhist looks for insight. Roger Walsh summarizes the differences this way, "Whereas yoga emphasizes the development of unwavering attention on inner objects, insight meditation emphasizes fluid attention to all objects, both inner and outer....The aim is to examine and understand the workings of body and mind as fully as possible and thereby cut through the distortions and misunderstandings that usually cloud awareness (p. 228)."

Walsh points out that all three practices – shamanic, yoga, and Buddhist – emphasize mastery and self-control while schizophrenia radically reduces all control. Yoga and Buddhist practices vary greatly and realize many different kinds of non-ordinary states, but in the most general terms it can be said that the yogi experiences states of pure consciousness and the Buddhist experiences the no-self behind egocentric illusion. Imagery for the Eastern mystic is scarce or non-existent, whereas imagery to the shamanic practice is paramount. In addition, only the shaman travels on *journeys into a spirit world*. It is this one aspect of shamanism that unifies all shamans: The Journey.

Where does the shaman go on these journeys? Walsh has great difficulty with this. Is the shaman's journey into the spirit world *real* in the sense that the soul of the shaman actually travels outside the body (*exosomatic*); or, is the imagery seen by the shaman created by the mind (*imaginal*)? He concludes there is simply no way to know, and he proposes that the Shamanic journey lies on a continuum from imaginal to exosomatic. The only way we can know what journeying is all about is to experience it. This is what mystics have been saying for a long time about their own insights: we can only know from personal experience.

That's what I've done; and, this is my record:

* * * *

Chapter 21: “We Will Be Your Teachers”

LowerWorld Record Locator:

- 03 APR 17: “We Will Be Your Teachers”
- 10 APR: Wolf Helps me Understand LW and UW
- 17 APR: Meeting Ram
- 28 APR: Comfort
- 09 MAY: LowerWorld Matters
- 23 JUN: Plato's World of Ideal Forms
- 25 JUL: Is Journeying Real?
- 27 JUL: A plague of Doubt
- 05 SEP: Simultaneity of Time
- 06 FEB 18: LowerWorld doesn't “Exist”
- 13 FEB: Three Questions
- 12 APR: The Future
- 23 APR: Decline Effectively
- 30 APR: STM

The following entries begin in a journal of meditation, the kind of entries I've been writing for many years, which is gradually taken over by the shamanic journey. The journal journey entries in this section will only include journeys to LowerWorld (LW) with an occasional reference to UpperWorld (UW) issues that carry over.

Only those entries I consider of essential value are included. As is generally the case with all writings to oneself, many of my entries were personal, too personal, and they will not be included. Some entries were boring and repetitious, and they will not be included. As a very private person, nearly all of these entries are difficult for me to lay bare to all and sundry. If I didn't think this information was important I wouldn't show any of it to anyone at all.

12 MAR 17: Sunday Morning Meditations:

I'm greedy and lazy. I've *always* been greedy and lazy; it is my nature. I have no one to blame but myself for taking so long and being so troublesome for my Daimon. I'm greedy for enlightenment but lazy in my practice. If I were greedy for enlightenment and had the industry to match, I'm sure I would have been enlightened long ago.

And now I'm an old man who finds himself increasingly greedy and lazy—more so, not less. In fact, I can hardly meditate at all anymore. Something has to change. Not me. It feels like I have nothing left

to give my meditation practice. I have to change the program in order to rekindle motivation. To that end, I am attending a Shamanic Drumming Workshop this next weekend, hoping to break through the doldrums and spiritual lethargy in which I find myself. I need a whole new perspective.

18-19 MAR 17: San Diego Shamanic Core Workshop: Saturday and Sunday. [*Copious notes were taken at this workshop in addition to the actual practice, but they are not included here. The most important things I learned was the journey to UP and LW, as well as power animal retrieval I also learned quite a lot about the ethics and practices of the shaman from the instructor, JC Safa, a shaman and psychic of many years experience. There were about 20 students.*]

25-26 MAR 17: Los Angeles Shamanic Healing Workshop: Saturday and Sunday (See the earlier chapter, "The Last Time I Drove to LA").

In the early morning of Wednesday, March 29th, I sat in my meditation chair in the Sacred Space corner of the monastery and journeyed to Lower World. It was the first time I had done this on my own. I did the drumming while I journeyed. I wasn't entirely sure if what I was doing was proper, but it worked. I was taught in my workshops to lie down and listen to the teacher drumming while journeying, but outside of class, I was alone and had to make it up as I went along.

The drum was in my left hand just touching my shoulder and quite close to my ear. The sound and vibrations were strong and conducive to trance. I intuitively "know" when I have received the imagery and information appropriate for a journey and signal the return when I intuitively know it's time to return. Except where noted, all of the following experiences recorded in this journal were done in this way.

My first image was of a pueblo world in the American Southwest, moonlight, desert, campfire, sunrise, then blue sky. A Wolf, Bear, Buffalo, Black Eagle, Rattlesnake, and Fox appeared to be awaiting my arrival. They later become known as my Family. Other than greeting them I didn't do or say anything of interest or consequence. I didn't really know what to do or say, so I thanked them for being there and returned to MiddleWorld.

03 APR 17: Monday: LowerWorld:

It was daytime. A bright sun was casting deep shadows on Anasazi pueblo cliff dwellings. There were people coming and going, Indigenous Americans, and this was not the 21st century any more, but nothing was very clear. In one small dwelling, a home, there was a young girl, maybe 8 or 9 years old, who I somehow knew was my daughter. She seemed to be happy to see me. She could see me. In the next room my wife was making tortillas or something with corn.

"Your son is out playing" she said.

"I love you," I said.

I don't know why I said that, except that I felt happy to see them, be with them, and I wished I could spend more time here.

"I have a question."

My wife, I don't know her name, looked at me then told my daughter to go out and play.

"It's OK if she stays."

My daughter, I don't know her name either, was glad. I asked my question.

"Should I study shamanism in workshops, or should I study on my own?"

Immediately I became an eagle soaring over the arid countryside of my Anasazi home. I was the eagle and not the eagle. I could see myself as an eagle at a distance and fly as an eagle at the same time. In the moment of that realization the scene changed, and I was myself, an eagle flying with another eagle. We flew to a blackened, burned out tree with two or three limbs, a few branches, no leaves. We became Men standing by the tree. My companion was Black Eagle.

"We will be your teachers," he said, then gestured with his hand sweeping across the landscape.

10 APR 17: Monday: 0600-0630: LowerWorld (LW):

It was difficult to see anything. Several times I gave up trying and just listened to the drum. I saw mountains similar to the California Sierra Nevadas in the Mount Whitney area. I looked around for some member of my LowerWorld family, but couldn't see anyone. I asked for a Compassionate Helper to assist me, and Fox appeared for a moment but ran off. Then, Wolf appeared. I had a question ready.

"What's the difference between UpperWorld and LowerWorld," I asked?

Wolf said nothing. He turned his back and walked away. He wanted me to follow him. I don't know how I know this; I just knew it. We wandered in the desert awhile. The drum continued. Wolf stopped, turned, and growled. I didn't understand, but I wasn't afraid. He jumped high into the sky until he was only a black speck in the blue, then he came down, landed easily, and looked at me, waiting. I didn't understand. He jumped again the same as before, landed, and looked at me. It occurred to me that maybe he was here in the same sense as gravity. He *could* go to UW, but always came back to LW. It attracted him like gravity, because LW was his home and he was happy here.

I thanked him and look around for other members of my Family—Buffalo, Eagle, Bear, Fox, and Rattlesnake. They appeared together as a group in the shade of a tree by a small river. I walked over to them just to be with them, because I felt happy here and reluctant to go. When I finally said goodbye, I was suddenly and rapidly pulled away from them, almost as if my own gravity was pulling me back to MiddleWorld. When I opened my eyes and put my drum down, I was in the very deep meditative state of Joy Ananda. It was the first time in along time, and I wished I had stayed in LowerWorld.

17 APR 17: Monday: 0635-0652: LW:

I was in the American southwestern desert again with cliffs and great boulders. A big-horned Ram descended an isolated pile of rocks, a rock pile, to where I was standing below.

"Are you a Power Animal," I asked?

"Yes."

"Are you my personal power animal?"

That was just a guess, because astrologically I'm an Aries, the sign of the Ram.

"Yes."

"When I return to LowerWorld should I seek you out specifically?"

"Yes."

"Is this my natural terrain, my home in LowerWorld?"

Having returned to the desert of the American Southwest nearly every time I journeyed here it felt like it probably was.

"Yes."

“Can I could touch you?”

“Yes.”

I proceeded to touch his great horns and pet him. While I did this I explained that I was here to learn as much as I could about LW. I thanked him and returned to MiddleWorld.

28 APR 17: Friday: 0627-0647: LW:

Met Ram on his Rockpile in *our* southwestern desert. A moment or two later the scene changed, and I was standing on the desert floor. Ram and Rockpile had disappeared, but right in front of me there was a bleached ram skull with horns lying in the sand. Somehow I knew it was Ram. I knelt down before him, and in doing so I saw that the desert was abloom in Spring flowers. I immediately felt a sense of joy and peace looking at the ram skull surrounded by flowers. Then, I got up and decided to go for a walk.

In a moment, I saw someone standing silently nearby. It was Black Eagle, the Man. I greeted him and we walked together silently. I was happy. We suddenly came upon the Family, one at a time. First, Rattlesnake who was actually poised to strike and with rattler rattling. It was only for show. Fox trotted up, then Buffalo, then Wolf, then Eagle, then Bear. I greeted each in turn and we walked together. I carried Rattlesnake on my shoulders, but he soon preferred to slither on the ground and had no difficulty keeping up with us.

After awhile Black Eagle and I decided to fly together, and we both became eagles in a great sky. When I say we “decided” to fly, we didn't actually discuss it; we simply did it. There were Blue Mountains in the distance, and I could see a small village of pueblo dwellings in another direction but had no interest in exploring them. We circled around, then caught an updraft and ascended higher and higher until we could see the round edge of the Earth. We soared there still and silent as the globe turned below.

Then, without comment, we both came back to the ram skull and desert flowers. I thanked Black Eagle and Ram, knowing it was time to go. I also knew that what I saw was meant to give me peace and serenity to combat the stress I had been feeling lately. Just seeing death as a ram skull in the midst of Spring flowers, the care of my LowerWorld Family, and the beauty of planet Earth from above—all gave me strength and courage. I thanked Ram and Black Eagle again as the drum sounded my return.

09 MAY 17: Tuesday: 0617-0641: LW:

Met Ram on his rock pile and asked a question of clarification:

“What questions, concerns, or requests would be most appropriate to bring to LowerWorld?”

Ram nodded in understanding and set out across the desert floor. I began to follow but quickly found myself soaring above as Eagle. It soon became apparent he had answered my question.

We stopped and stood on his Rock Pile, he as Ram and I as Man. The answer to my question had been given without words. That is, LW occupants worked best as advisers, et cetera, on all matters between the surface of the Earth and the flight of the Eagle. This would include all manner of things—from botany to human relationships. Stoic philosophy came to mind, and how all parts – logic, physics, and ethics – were related to LW, but these in turn were founded on Stoic cosmology. Questions of the cosmos were best pursued in UW, while most questions about nature, lower case, were best pursued in LW. But it was not a hard line between the worlds and there was overlap and interaction.

19 MAY 17: Friday: 0621-0638: LW:

Met Ram on top of Rock Pile. As I began to ask a question, Bear appeared. Remembering what another shaman suggested recently, I gave him a large chunk of (imaginary) honeycomb. He was delighted, but I wasn't terribly impressed. *Imaginary* treat for an *imaginary* animal provokes *imaginary* response. (I later told the shaman who made the suggestion that his honeycomb idea was an act of imagination compounded. He wasn't amused.) Again, I had questions for Ram.

"Where am I?"

"Where is this place, LowerWorld?"

"Is it a creation of my subconscious mind?"

After asking these questions, a series of scenes and events took place, so many that I found it difficult to remember and record them, but I believe this is all, or nearly all of what happened.

Ram, Bear, and I went from Rock Pile to the desert floor. (we were in the American Southwest as usual). We were joined in turn by all members of my Family: Buffalo, Wolf, Fox, Rattlesnake, and Eagle. They morphed into people, a whole village of Native Americans, and we danced to the sound of my drum. This was a bit of a surprise to me, because I usually resist dancing—not fond of it.

In a few minutes, they all disappeared, and Black Eagle, the Man approached. We immediately morphed into eagles and flew together awhile over the desert landscape. We stopped on a bare branch of a long dead tree bleached silver by the sun. We stood together at the foot of the tree. I stared at the dead tree, and it began to move, stretching its branches, as it started to chuckle, then laugh out loud.

A nearby stream I hadn't noticed before became visible, and it began laughing as well. It actually leaped up in separate water spots as it laughed. Then the sky laughed, and the sun laughed, and suddenly I was alone. Rattlesnake appeared as I began to walk away. I sat down beside it as it coiled, then shook its rattle as it sunk its fangs into my arm. It didn't hurt, but I felt it, and I also felt the venom seeping into my veins. I then turned into a rattlesnake and we danced together, swaying our heads back and forth, then gliding off.

I was suddenly alone again—walking on the desert floor, no destination in particular, when Wolf joined me. We walked together awhile, silently, and I noticed the entire wolf pack was there, including a couple of pups. Then I was walking alone again. I saw Rock Pile with Ram standing on top. I joined him. I didn't know what to say, so I said nothing.

I looked at the desert floor below, and it turned into water, a lake, then it rose higher. In barely a minute it reached the top of our rock. A whole ocean, rising up around us. Higher and higher it rose until we were completely covered, and I found myself at the bottom of the sea. Then, Ram and I were alone together on top of his Rock Pile again, and the desert appeared as before. The drum sounded my return.

23 JUN 17: Friday: 0626-0649: LW:

Met Ram on Rockpile. We sat down together. I complained about my journeys to UpperWorld. Things had been difficult with a number of issues. Ram said nothing. I kept complaining and said I was ready to stay away from UW altogether. But, then, I remembered I had never talked to Heraclitus, and the thought of that made me think I should return. I also wondered if it was possible to astral travel, even draw some images of another world, and suddenly UW journeying seemed exciting again. Ram said nothing.

Without warning or preamble, a realization came to my mind that LowerWorld is Plato's theory of forms. Where did that come from? I hadn't thought about Plato's spiritual realm of archetypal forms in years, except in passing, and it wasn't really an idea I cared much about. But there it was. I looked at Ram. He said nothing, just chewed his cud and stared off into the distance. The Power Animals of LW are the perfect form of which all MiddleWorld animals are merely imperfect copies. Then, I was somehow informed, matter-of-factly, that evolution also existed in LowerWorld, that animals in LW had evolved to become perfect.

It was difficult to take in, this information. Where did it come from? Was Ram communicating telepathically? Why did I suddenly think about Plato and LowerWorld in the midst of complaining about my journeys to UpperWorld? Ram said nothing, and I was so surprised by this insight that I didn't even think to ask him how I came by it.

25 JUL 17: Tuesday: 0600-0620: LW:

Met Ram on Rockpile. Bear and Owl were there. [*Owl was a power animal given to me by a shaman friend some weeks earlier.*] I gave Bear a large chunk of imaginary honeycomb and gave Owl two imaginary mice, holding them above my head by their tails. Owl flew up, swooped down, grabbed them with her talons, then landed on Rockpile and set them free.

I explained why I was there, my doubts and desire to know what I was doing with journeying. Was it real, or was my subconscious telling me stories? Was it a Spirit World or the world inside my head? I asked the question of all of them, but Ram took charge, nodding his understanding, then leading us down to the desert floor.

We passed most of the places I had journeyed to previously. I could even see Black Eagle Aerie and Monastery Mountain in the distance. We passed Renovo Canyon and came to a great multitude of shamans, 50 or more, dancing and drumming at the base of a large butte. Black Eagle joined us as we stood and watched them.

"You are doing what shamans have been doing for millenia," Ram said. "Basically, telling stories about the unknown."

I immediately assumed that he was saying the Spirit World was inside my head and nothing more. I felt a sense of relief, actually, now that I knew the answer. I was just making this all up, and what we had in common, the shamans of human history and I, was a talent for storytelling. We were the storytellers in the human evolution of talents. And, of course, some are, were, great storytellers and some were of more modest talent, such as myself. But, then Ram spoke again.

"Are there experiences in your life that you can't explain, some events that can only be answered as Great Unknowns?"

"Yes, certainly."

"The same is true for them," he said, gesturing in the direction of the drumming shamans.

"They, too, are storytellers of the unknown, attempting to describe a reality where their experiences of the Great Unknown can be accounted for.

"There is one significant difference between you and them. They lived in an age and environment of belief; you live in an age of doubt. But the Great Unknown exists for both of you just the same. Your stories will represent your time and age just as their stories represented their time and age."

I said nothing. We listened to the shamans drumming for awhile, then started back.

27 JUL 17: Thursday: 0600-0619: LW:

Met Ram on Rockpile. I told him I was being consumed by a plague of doubt, and I wanted it to stop. I wanted to address all inhabitants of LowerWorld. Ram made no objection. Bear, Owl, and Black Eagle appeared and stood with us as I spoke. I loudly spoke (in my mind, of course) to the Four Directions:

“Please show me some evidence or grant me some experience that I can know and remember whenever I am overwhelmed with doubt,” I repeated four times.

After listening and listening and hearing only my own drumming, the five of us were joined by the great shaman drumming circle, and I realized that they, too, had known what I know of doubt—but maybe not all of them.

Suddenly, a giant jinn, a genie appeared. It was at least 20 feet tall and looked just like some pictures I've seen of them—the turban, beads, small vest on a rotund girth, pantaloons, and curly-toed slippers. But, he was diaphanous, only partially materialized. I was disappointed and thought it was a silly joke, but decided to go with it and see what would happen. I focused on him and restated my wish.

He stretched and smiled with the innocent grin of a baby, and I think he was trying to show me I had nothing to fear despite his enormous size.

“It's a matter of choice,” he said. “If you feed your doubt it will grow; if you nurture your belief it will become stronger; if you search for reasons not to believe, you will find them; if you search for reasons to believe, then you will have all the evidence you need. Choose to believe and you will know.” I repeated what he told me, just to make sure I understood. I paused. He said nothing further, then vanished.

I continue journeying to LowerWorld, but spent more and more time in UpperWorld. I have passed over more than six months of LW journeys in this account because they were often personal and often delved into regions that are best left alone—for now.

06 FEB 18: Tuesday: 0624-0641: LW—Cosmology:

Intent: Uncertain intent, going to LW mostly for visualizing practice:

Realization: Going into my cave (my LW point of entry) I saw junk strewn about, the usual fast food cups, boxes, and wrappers. I picked them up, put them in a garbage can nearby, and scooped up sand at the back of the cave in order to find my LW entrance. I had never done this before. Instead of the usual tunnel to LW, it immediately opened up into a passageway where I could stand and walk comfortably illuminated by a Golden Light.

At the mouth of the opening to LW, I could see that *everything* was different. There was a glowing heavenly appearance everywhere I looked. I stood still, uncertain of where I was or what I should do. It was as if I had never been to LW before, had never seen what it really was. I decided to take to the sky as Eagle. I soared above the landscape trying to make out the details of what I saw below. What appeared was not detail so much as realization that in Spirit World none of my preconceived MiddleWorld “baggage” applied here. Without the dynamic continuum of corporeality none of the Dark Side of MW existed. So many of my previous LW journeys were based upon MW negatives and struggle, but none of that existed here because nothing really existed at all. I wondered what was actually happening? What were these animals and trees and fields of flowers actually *doing*?

As soon as I asked these questions, I quickly realized they were not doing anything, because doing is a function of material existence. As a denizen of MW, I was the only one doing anything in LW, and none of this was real, nothing was alive as we know aliveness. The Winter Buffalo were not hungry. There was no necessity for pawing through fields of snow to find tiny morsels of grass and seed below.

The Spirit World by definition does not exist. But it does exist as some thing or form unknown in MW. Is it *real* in any sense at all, or is it strictly a creation of MW imaginations? How can Power Animals have power and provide any form of protection to a MW person if it has no corporeal existence? Is it strictly confined to the imagination of the mind? Of course, we know that imagination has great power over the physical action of those life forms who have the ability to imagine, to believe.

Oh, I almost forgot. While there, I realized that *Stoic philosophy only has value in MiddleWorld*. In the Spirit World, it is meaningless because its entire existence is based upon the corporeal.

13 FEB 18: Tuesday: 0635-0659: LW—Cosmology:

Intent: To ask three important foundational questions about Power Animals and Healing:

Realization: This was a *true journey*. The questions I posed were done so without any foreknowledge of what the answers might be. These were the questions I planned last night and took with me to LW:

- What is the power of a Power Animal?
- How can an incorporeal entity affect or influence a corporeal being of MiddleWorld?
- How does healing take place when a shaman works with the Spirit World to influence a material being in need of healing in MW?

Answer to #1: As I dropped into LW I was immediately flying as Eagle. I circled Rockpile and saw Ram Standing as sentinel as ever he does. I was on my way to Black Eagle Aerie [*This is a cabin where Black Eagle, Bear, Owl, and I have met many times over the past six months.*] to ask these questions, but on impulse I circled back and landed as Man beside Ram. After all, he was a Power Animal, why not ask him?

Without a word, my sentinel who had always been rather stiff and formal in our interactions, a true LW guardian, became very affectionate and began to rub his face and horns against my leg. The answer came to me immediately by this physical demonstration: Love. Love is the power of the Power Animal. Of course. What else was so powerful it could transcend all barriers between worlds? The PA protects the MW corporeal being, its ally, by encircling it with a field of love.

Answer to #2: I thanked Ram and flew off to the cabin. As soon as I arrived, I asked B.E., Bear, and Owl how it was possible for a spirit being to affect a material being of MW? How is it possible for an entity without physical substance to manipulate one with physicality? Again, the answer came immediately: Consciousness. No one actually said anything. I didn't see or hear words coming out of anyone's mouth. The answer was somehow placed in my mind, effortlessly and without hesitation.

Further, all existence, seen and unseen, has a form of consciousness—rocks, trees, rivers, animals, and yes, dark matter. Everything in the cosmos has consciousness in varying degrees and form. [*Ancient Stoic cosmology agrees that Pneuma pervades all of nature in varying degrees of content, from low to high, from rocks to human beings, and that nature is conscious and providential.*] The connection of consciousness from entities of the Spirit World to human beings of MW is through

the subconscious mind, which is both conduit and translator. The Spirit Being doesn't manipulate matter it communicates with the consciousness of that material being.

Answers to both of my questions made perfect sense, and neither of the answers were what I expected. In fact they were not expected because I had no expectation. I was grateful, but my head seemed too full to go on, so I proposed we take a break and go feed the Winter Buffalo.

[In LowerWorld journeying this winter, the four of us often piled into an old pickup truck with bales of hay to feed the Winter Buffalo foraging in a snowy field a couple of miles down the road from the cabin. In Sioux mythology, the Buffalo is normally the one who feeds the people, so for us “feeding the Winter Buffalo” symbolized those who worked hard all their lives without recognition or reward until after death. The most common example is the Dutch painter, Vincent Van Gogh. This little excursion was a favorite of ours, and of course the Winter Buffalo were always happy to see us. I always drove the pickup, but one time Owl insisted on driving. Hysterically funny.]

Answer to #3: Back at the cabin I took a deep breath, figuratively speaking, and asked the final and hardest question. How can healing take place with spirit beings working on material beings? The answer was simply a combination of the answers to questions 1 and 2: Love and consciousness. The Shaman is not the power, he or she is simply the facilitator. In Japanese, the word for such a concept is *omiai*, or go-between. The shaman's allies bring love and consciousness of healing to the body of the patient. Several allies, both the shaman's and the patient's allies, if they have them, can work together to enhance the result.

How it works. The body heals itself. The shaman directs the healer, the Spirit Being, to the afflicted person. The afflicted body part receives love and the conscious encouragement from the spirit to heal, and healing begins. But, there are exceptions, two exceptions that became clear to me: One, the person may not heal readily because the patient has an important life lesson to learn from the sickness. Two, the disability and the lesson may also lead to death, because it is time for the person to die.

The lesson may be instructive to the afflicted and to others involved—family, friends, doctors, et cetera, Both the lesson and death, if that is the outcome, have already been arranged or agreed upon in advance by the person involved, and the healing love and consciousness will not change the outcome. But, it can bring peace and a lessening of physical discomforts.

30 APR 18: Monday: 0625-0656: LW:

Intent: To ask Black Eagle how to increase or improve my trance ability in journeying

Realization: Came out of the cave into LW, seeing only faint and fleeting imagery of one usual location, then another. Not happy with any location. Pointless. They all seemed like nothing more than memories of earlier imaginary places, which were, in turn, vague memories of scenery I'd seen for real or in pictures. I began to wonder if I had ever really journeyed at all.

I turned off my imagination and stared at the blackness inside my eyelids. Occasionally I would see a light shape that would move, then disappear in a few seconds. I decided to just stay with black nothingness and listen to the drum. In so doing, I noticed my mind wandering, as it always does, in both meditation and journeying. I've already determined this is not a good thing, so I could say this may be the first instruction in deepening my trance.

Step #1: Listen to the drum, each beat of the drum. Focus on that, don't waiver, think of the drum in journeying as I do with listening to my breath in PnWPM. Remembering to listen to my breath inspired the next step.

Step #2: Listen to the drum AND listen to my breath at the same time. The former can be thought of as particle; the latter as waves. The two working together definitely deepened my "trance" in the form of a feeling of deep meditation. No imagery, no Black Eagle, no journey to anywhere; just the black inside my eyelids.

Listening to the particles and waves, the drumming and breathing, with total focus and an empty mind is a new form of meditation that may be something to pursue for its own sake. In this practice, I have faith the next step will come when I am ready. At a minimum, it's a way to experience deep meditation where great insights can happen.

[I tried this new meditation method again the following day and experienced a similar depth in my trance meditation. I decided then to call it Shamanic Trance Meditation (STM) and pursue it single-mindedly for a time. Within a week it had proven to be the most effective path to deep meditation I had ever experienced.]

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Chapter 22: Initiation

UpperWorld Record Locator #1:

- 04 APR 17: Difficulties with UpperWorld
- 05-6 APR: Apology
- 07-8 APR: Initiation
- 25 APR: JoN asks a question
- 27 APR: Why are you my teacher?
- 02 MAY: First doubts
- 03 MAY: It takes courage to be compassionate
- 16 MAY: Society of Epictetus
- 20 MAY: Journeying and the Subconscious mind
- 29 MAY: What is God?
- 01 JUN: What is Dark Matter?
- 02-3 JUN: Questioning everything he said
- 08 AUG: Purpose of life
- 24 AUG: Life lessons
- 01 SEP: JoN and Helen Shucman
- 01-2 JAN 18: Heraclitus and JoN
- 29 MAR: Fear
- 21 JUN: The Shaman's heart

04 APR 17: Tuesday: 8:30 PM: UpperWorld:

Nothing. Only darkness. I ascended *seven* levels, considered going to an 8th level but decided to wait on level seven a little longer. Mentally called out, "I'm searching for my teacher. Is my teacher here?" Nothing. No teachers of any kind. I'm beginning to wonder if the UpperWorld is closed to me for some reason. The LowerWorld is so much more accessible I wonder if I should just forget about UpperWorld for awhile; or, should I be trying harder?

05 APR 17: Wednesday: 3:15 AM:

As an antidote to my usual insomnia I attempted to journey to the UpperWorld, using my *imagination* to hear the sound of drumming. It was too early to actually have that kind of noise in the house....I traveled to four levels before seeing what appeared to be a person sitting on the ground covered with a blanket. I asked the blanketed lump if it was my teacher. It didn't answer, but it strangely whirled as a kind of answer.

I sat down beside it and asked, "Where is my mother now?" [*My 95-year-old mother had died four months previously.*] There was no verbal response but I suddenly received very clear images of Grandpa Jones, my mother's father, then Grandma Jones, then Uncle Elmer and Aunt Laura, her

brother and sister, also deceased. These images were a comfort to me.

[I thought I was being rather clever by asking this teacher or “Compassionate Helper” on level four where mother was now. I thought that by answering that question it would also have to answer an even more important question: “Is there life after death?” But, by simply showing me images of my mother's family, people who have already been deceased a long time, it avoided answering the hidden question about life after death. That is, if mother is with the dead, that fact says nothing about whether or not they are in some form of afterlife. It only means she is with the dead. Nothing more. It says nothing about their condition.]

1:15 PM: UpperWorld:

Frustrated by my difficulties “seeing” in UpperWorld (UW), a problem that began in my first shaman workshop with JC Safa, I decided to deal with the matter head on. I went to the seven levels and loudly said the same thing at each level:

“I am Black Eagle. My spiritual grandfather is Black Eagle of the Assiniboine Tribe, the Nakota. I am searching for a Compassionate Helper, and I want to apologize for my offensive behavior here in the UpperWorld. I am an old man but a mere child, a baby, when it comes to journeying. I will try harder to be a better student.” I didn't say that *exactly* at each level, but very nearly that message.

When I got to the 7th Level and finished my apology, I saw Jesus of Nazareth. I very nearly dismissed it from my consciousness, the same as I did last night. (I have to correct my entry for the evening of 04 APR, I didn't see “nothing” last night. I saw Jesus on the first level, and I immediately dismissed what I saw out of hand, almost with disgust.) It was all the images of Jesus, the white man's Jesus, that I knew as a boy. There is no way the *real* Jesus, if there was such a person, would look like that, but this time I realized that if I didn't see these childhood images of Jesus how would I know it was Jesus? I apologized directly to him, and asked if he was my teacher. He said nothing—just as the drumming called me back. I left in haste.

06 APR 17: Thursday: 2 PM: **MiddleWorld Commentary:**

There must be literally about one billion people in the world right now who would be absolutely thrilled to meet Jesus of Nazareth in UpperWorld, twice, and ask him if he was their teacher. At *least* a billion people would want that, but I'm not one of them. “Jesus!” is one of my favorite swear words, but that's about as close as he and I have been since I was a child.

Why come to me? I'm not a Christian; I'm a Stoic, and let's not forget—it was the followers of Jesus who destroyed our school and *all* of the writings of the Greek Stoics. I certainly do *not* believe Jesus is any more a son of God than I am. We are all part of God; we are God. That's what I believe, and I'm frankly reluctant to have him as my teacher. On the other hand, I do respect him; or, at least his reputation. If a fourth of what is said about him is true, then he would have been an exceptional man. The wisdom of Jesus would likely be of a high order. In fact, while I'm reluctant to have Jesus as my teacher, I also feel inadequate and undeserving. Regardless, it just seems an odd fit.

07 APR 17: Friday: 0345-0422: UpperWorld (UW):

First, I need to comment about the visuals at each level. When I penetrated the sky and entered the first level of the UW, I immediately saw a city of finished stone and/or terracotta walls. It may have been some location in a very early Greece or Rome period, or possibly an Inca or Mayan temple. There were people walking about in robes, but they acted as if they didn't see me. My teacher wasn't there.

I went to the second level, ascending by climbing my ladder that was there when I looked for it. The second level was also a city, more refined and beautiful, and the word alabaster came to mind, but it may have been white marble. There were a few people, also in robes, but they acted as if they didn't see me. I asked if my teacher was there. I was ignored.

The third level was also a city, one of crystal, or maybe the steel and glass of a modern city, and whereas it was daytime in the two lower levels it was night in the crystal city. I saw no one, and no one answered or appeared when I asked if my teacher was there.

As I climbed the ladder to the 4th level, I wondered if Jesus would be there. I remembered that I last saw him on the 7th level, but I saw someone or something on the 4th level the day before that, and I just thought he would be there. And he was.

I didn't see Jesus immediately. First, I looked around and noticed the 4th level was a wilderness at twilight going dark. There were no cities visible, no towns, and no other people. Jesus appeared as I remembered him from childhood paintings and icons. He said nothing. I thought, "Jesus had one special message in his life that none of the other great religious leaders had before him. His message was one of love, and he was tried and killed for this message and the popularity of this message made the rabbis and other religious leaders jealous, and it must have taken enormous courage to do and say the things he did and said.

"Are you my teacher?"

"Yes, I am," he said.

"Is there something I need to learn now?"

"There is."

I had forgotten to come to the UW with a specific question in mind, but suddenly realized what I wanted and needed was the very thing for which Jesus of Nazareth was the master.

"Would you give me a shaman's heart?"

"Yes," he said, and he placed his hand on my heart. Then he hugged me. I thanked him, and he disappeared. I knew it was time to return.

08 APR 17: Saturday afternoon: MW Commentary:

I felt nothing in my heart when Jesus put his hand on it. I mean, it felt good, comforting, but there were no jolts of electricity or outpourings of love for all humankind. In fact, I had *not* asked for a heart with greater love. I asked him for a shaman's heart, which is rather strange, because I don't even know what that means. What are the qualities of the shaman's heart? I have no idea, but once I said it I knew that's what I wanted. Maybe it's the same or similar to the heart of the so-called Compassionate Helpers. Jesus was my teacher because he was a Great Master of exactly what I wanted—even though I don't actually know what it was that I asked for. . . .

Jesus initiated me as a shaman? Really? I don't know how all this happens. I'm still inclined towards the subconscious power of invention and creation. I can also consider the possibility that the subconscious is the connection from human consciousness to cosmic consciousness, but it's all theory and speculation....The more I know of the Three Worlds the more I'm convinced that Stoic philosophy is still the most excellent way to live in the ordinary reality of MiddleWorld. At times our familiar world resembles a madhouse. Now is one of those times. We live in the Age of Donald when truth no longer objectively exists, and at such a time the teachings of the Stoa help to preserve one's sanity.

25 APR 17: Tuesday: 0617-0646: UW:

Proceeded directly to the 4th level. All imagery faint and fleeting, mostly imaginary perhaps. After a brief wait, I see Jesus praying, kneeling by a rock. Then I see other popular images of him, such as being impaled on the cross. I was ready with this question:

“Is there any method or mantra I can use to have the mystical experience of seeing and knowing the oneness of all things?”

“No,” he said. “It's a gift.”

“Can I ask for this gift?”

“Yes, but that doesn't assure you will get it. Again, it's a gift,” he said.

Then Jesus asked me a question.

“If you understand something conceptually, why do you need to also see it?”

“A person may hear stories from travelers about how beautiful the city of Paris is,” I said, “and he may even believe them, but to actually see Paris would confirm what he had heard.”

Jesus didn't have an answer, or at least nothing was said, but I got the impression he wasn't impressed.

Before I left I thanked him for being my teacher, then asked if on my next journey I could ask him something of his life here on Earth—to confirm or deny all the stories. He said I could, then turned and walked away. I saw his backside and realized I had never seen the backside of Jesus in all the pictures of him that I saw in my childhood.

27 APR 17: Thursday: 0615-0635: UW:

Met Jesus on the 4th level and as promised he answered my questions.

“Who are you? Are you the Jesus of Nazareth who lived on Earth (MW) about 2000 years ago?”

“I am.”

“What are you?”

“I am the spirit of that Jesus.”

“Where are you?”

“I am in the spirit world, the UpperWorld, as you shaman would call it.”

“Why are you my teacher? Of all the millions of possible teachers in the UW, why did you come and appear when I asked for a teacher?”

“You needed . . . you need me.”

“Why did I need *you* in particular?”

“I'm not prepared to answer that at this time.”

“How do you communicate with me?”

“Through your consciousness. Consciousness is everywhere, and anyone from the spirit world can communicate with you when the need warrants it.”

“Can I see what you really looked like when you were living here on Earth?”

“What does it matter? It was only a body. It's the spirit that matters; my physical body back then means nothing.”

I then told him that I had many more questions, from my own life to current events in the world, and I asked if I could speak to him about them. He said I could. Then I thanked him for giving me the heart of a shaman, but I didn't ask what that was.

02 MAY 17: Tuesday: 0544-0605: UW:

Met and asked Jesus a number of questions about his life and purpose while here on Earth.
[*Questions and answers omitted.*]

Later Commentary:

His answers seemed quite general, even “canned,” and not very insightful. I thanked him but was not at all happy with this encounter. I felt like our time as teacher and student had come to an end. There didn't seem to be any more to talk about, and I asked if I should be looking for a new teacher the next time I journeyed to the UW. His answer seemed affirmative—even though no words were spoken.

I don't feel like there was any contact with the *real* Jesus in this journey. I felt like it was all an imaginary story, not even a hallucination, and I learned nothing new. Even as my talented subconscious mind goes this was *not* impressive. The question that remains and is, frankly, disturbing, is why? Why did my imagination or subconscious or whatever send up Jesus as my teacher when I consciously would have preferred almost anyone else? I acquiesced with the Jesus thing because I thought maybe I was supposed to learn something amazing or really insightful, but as of this moment the whole encounter seems like a silly and embarrassing waste of time.

03 MAY 17: Wednesday: 12:38 AM:

[*Insomnia with lower back pain and an intractable life problem: my place in the Stoic community. In my journey journal this problem is spelled out in some detail, but privacy of certain issues and names prevents me from including it here. This is only mentioned because of what followed.* **0629-0646: UW:** *I talked to Jesus about my concerns. He told me exactly what needed to be done, then said,*

[*Response deleted due to privacy issues.*]

I need to mention one other thing he said after telling me my life lesson: “It takes courage to be compassionate in a world ruled by selfishness and greed.”

16 MAY 17: Tuesday: 0545-0606: UW:

Again, I spoke to Jesus on the 4th level. Once again, I first saw him praying on his knees at the rock. This image in my childhood memory is of Jesus praying to God, his Heavenly Father, to excuse him from the ordeal of his crucifixion. As the story goes, he prayed all night while his disciples slept. By morning, he was resigned to his fate, and that's when Judas came with the soldiers to point him out as the one to be arrested. At least, that's the story as I remember it.

I went to the UW to ask Jesus about a deep wound recently self-inflicted. I asked about my recent abrupt departure from my position of leadership in a non-profit organization, the Society of Epictetus, founded to establish a Stoic religion. After more than two years of effort with this group, I severed all my ties with religious Stoicism, including the seminary we founded, and had retreated into my role as Scholarch of the College. This act, this severing of ties with the new Stoic religion and those who had put their trust in me as a leader of our mission, pained me, has pained me since I left about four months ago.

Did I make a mistake," I asked? We stood side-by-side as I spoke.

"Yes."

I spoke at length about not wanting to bring yet another religion into the world. It seemed to me that an educational nonprofit, such as the College of Stoic Philosophers, could do everything that the world needed.

"Why do Stoics need a religion?"

"It focuses the mind," he said.

"If I'm going to do this I will need help with the cosmology and principles," I said.

"You already have everything you need, but I will help."

"Why do Stoics need a religion when there were already so many ways to "focus the mind?"

"Stoicism is unique and would appeal to people who could not believe in other faiths."

This was an argument I had originally given myself to get involved with founding a Stoic religion in the first place, but after two years of floundering, that argument was no longer convincing.

I stopped talking and listened to the drum for awhile. I didn't know what to say, and I didn't feel good about what I had heard. I tried again:

"Why wouldn't a secular school, such as the College of Stoic Philosophers work as well, even better, because it would appeal to so many more people, even atheists."

"Education is useful, but it doesn't focus the mind and one's commitment to the good in the same way a Stoic religion would do."

I listened to the drum for awhile.

"If this is real, and not just my imagination born of a sense of guilt for having resigned from the Society, then I'll do it. But, I'll need more proof. I'll be back," I said.

Commentary—Later that morning:

This is *not* good news. Once again, I'm questioning the whole shaman journeying validity, veracity thing. Of course, I'm aware that these messages are to be taken as advice, not demands or commandments, but how can I trust or believe them at all? I'm the one at risk here. I'm the one who has to assume the role of MiddleWorld martyr, and I need some kind of powerful evidence that this is more than just guilt.

I did leave the religious group abruptly, but for good cause; that is, I completely lost faith in the purpose and value of having a Stoic religion. Even now, 90% of me says, "No! This is Bullshit! I don't need a religion to tell me how to have a spiritual life." I could go on and on for pages about this, but the point is: Yes! I can be a martyr and be miserable. There *are* greater causes than my personal liberty and happiness. There *are* times when choosing the hard path is the right choice. But, I can only promote such a cause or path if I'm convinced it's the right thing to do. 90% of me says the secular path is better for *everyone*. Only 10% of me even acknowledges the need for a Stoic religion. Unless I'm 100% convinced and committed to the hard, religious martyr path, then following such a path would be absurd, insane, irrational!

And that's only dealing with my own self-pity. I should also have some care for the embarrassment and discomfort of every member of my family, including my wife. How can anyone feel good about having a religious nut for a friend or family member? For the rest of her life Amielle would be embarrassed or just say nothing about the lunatic her husband became in his later years. Perhaps I'm being overly dramatic, but I don't think so. This is *not* good news!

17 MAY 17: Wednesday: 0616-0636: UW:

Met Jesus on the 4th level. He was kneeling and praying at the rock again. I explained my concern about organized religion.

“Is it was really necessary for Stoicism to be organized as a religion for me to continue my work?”

“No.”

I described my LW journey where I met the monk at the monastery [*journey not included here*] and the joy I felt at the idea of restoring the Stoic monasterium as a headquarters for the College of Stoic Philosophers. I said that this goal and vision, although admittedly hard to do, gave me enthusiasm and joy, whereas organizing a religion only gave me misery and depression. I asked if I could fulfill my destiny by having a secular monasterium. He said, “Yes.” I asked once again just to be certain. He agreed once more. Then I saw him on his knees at the rock again. Only this time he stood up, came over to me, and we hugged. I thanked him and was very glad.

Commentary. (That afternoon.) The thing that keeps coming back to me when I remember this morning's journey is the action of the praying Jesus. He got up off his knees and came over to me and we hugged. When Jesus prayed to his Heavenly Father to spare him from the horrors of crucifixion, his prayer was ignored. In my case, Jesus got up and assured me all would be well if I did not want to be a martyr for a Stoic religion. God didn't spare Jesus, but Jesus spared me.

20 MAY 17: Saturday: 0555-0608: UW:

I began asking Jesus the same questions as I asked in the LW the day before.

“Where am I? Where is this place, UpperWorld? Is it a creation of my subconscious mind?”

“Yes and no.”

“What do you mean, can you elaborate?”

“Much of what is seen and heard from the Spirit World is the creation of the subconscious. For example, I'm not speaking to you in English, but your subconscious picks up the information and gives it an intelligible translation.

“If that's so, then you must have an existence separate from my mind?”

“Yes.”

“So, then, you enter my consciousness via the subconscious mind as image creator and language decoder?”

“Yes.”

“How does it do that?”

“Evolution,” he said. “The subconscious mind is amazing.”

“Is the 4th level where you lived?”

“No, it was created by your subconscious as a place for you to stand, because it knows you would be more comfortable with something under your feet.”

“What would it look like without the dust, rock, and rubble platform I'm standing on?”

I saw two dots on a field of nothing. My subconscious mind was right. I *was* more comfortable with a floor beneath my feet. Then, the usual UW, 4th level wasteland was transformed into a veritable Garden of Eden with light, color, flowers, and trees—but only for a moment. Then it went back to the dirt and rock.

“Your subconscious mind did that,” Jesus said.

“Can you explain how you are able to communicate with my subconscious mind from a location external to it?”

“That will have to wait for another time.”

It was clear that we were finished. I thanked him and he disappeared. For a moment or two I looked at the dust, rock, and rubble beneath my feet. About 3 feet in front of me a green tendril of a plant began to grow. I watched it for a moment, then it disappeared, and the signal to return was sounded.

Commentary. That afternoon.

One of the dangers of this kind of work is weakening one's ability to make decisions. However, if we believe that journeying enhances the dialogue between the conscious and subconscious minds, then it's strengthening, not weakening. That's my inclination at this time. But, I will not rule out the possibility that there really are spirit worlds out there in an objective, external existence. Evidence for such a non-material reality is not certain, but my first Great Insight was of Empty Sky and Great Sea, and we in the MW are in the Great Sea. Are those storied incarnations in the UW and LW *more* than literary inventions of the subconscious?

There are indications that the conscious and subconscious don't simply parrot one another. I didn't want Jesus for my UW teacher, but he stayed on even after I rejected him, twice, and I pretty much told him I didn't think he was the right teacher for me. Even after all these meetings with him I still wonder when he's going to pass me on to someone else, another teacher, and I'm rather looking forward to it when he does.

I still don't think I deserve someone like Jesus. The most famous person in the history of the world is too important to be guiding someone as insignificant as myself. I think I would be more comfortable with a wise person by any name, preferably one not known to me. I would like to speak to someone who knows how things work between the Three Worlds. Journeying seems to be a connecting link from the MW to the other worlds.

Honestly, my curiosity outweighs my good sense. I, too, can be very atheist about all this and still find it fascinating. What is going on? What is this story that's being told, and how does it end? Perhaps it's a never-ending story that goes on as long as I continue to journey.

[NOTE: Journeying interrupted by my wife's family get-together in New York City where her sister lives and is celebrating a showing of her work at the Whitney Biennial. While in NYC, I thought a lot about Jesus and my journeys. The following are commentary notes that I took while there:]

24 MAY 17: 12:05 AM: Brooklyn, NY: Commentary:

Religion and the Focused Mind. The focused mind is in a sense a mind that is shut down, narrowed, excluding much of the full scope of reality. I don't want Stoic philosophy narrowed. I don't want a focused mind; I want an open mind. I want atheists and religious Stoics to find common ground in the experience of spiritual exploration.

8:00 AM, same day: It takes an effort to be open-minded, to appreciate people, places, and ideas that do not “naturally” agree with me. After I learn Stoic theory and accept its value for my life I have essentially cut myself off from all others who disagree with me and follow another philosophy. When I have made a commitment to the practice of “my philosophy,” I am now a Stoic, and again I'm removed from all others who disagree with me. When we consider how few Stoics there are in the

world today that represents being different from about 99.99% of the human species on this planet. Talk about focus. At this point in our history just following Stoic philosophy has effectively isolated me philosophically from nearly everyone.

Then, when we further divide our tiny tribe into atheists, deists, agnostics, and panpsychists we get even smaller. *Then*, when we align ourselves with one political philosophy or another and are convinced all other political persuasions are ruining the future of humanity, we are rejecting even the few who could be our brothers and sisters. This is why I will *not* focus my mind on Stoic religion. I am a cosmopolitan Stoic, one with an open heart and mind. This is the path of human evolution—away from the we-versus-them orientation of our primal past (see Great Insight #6).

So, I must stop now and ask, “Was this a test?” Was Jesus testing me when he encouraged me to rejoin the religious Stoics that I helped to found? When he offered as a reason that religion “Focuses the mind,” was this a test to see if I *wanted* to become closed, shut down, and alienated from nearly everyone?

Or, is Jesus just plain wrong?

29 MAY 17: Monday: 0615-0633: UW—4:

[It had been quite awhile since I saw Jesus, and I thought he may no longer be my teacher. I looked around on each level and asked everyone I saw if they were my teacher. I was ignored. Then I decided that even if he was not going to continue as my teacher it would be more polite for me to go back and have him tell me so.]

He was there on the 4th level, almost as if he had been waiting. We met face-to-face, then walked side-by-side into the empty wasteland. Even with all this time together I'm still not sure what he looks like. Finally, I said that maybe I had more personal questions that should be explored, but nothing seemed urgent at the moment, so I would like to ask a question of another sort. He said nothing.

“What is God,” I asked?

There was a moment of silence, which I started to fill with more words of an explanatory nature, but then decided to keep my thoughts and my mouth shut.

Suddenly in that dark wasteland of rock, dust, and rubble an oasis appeared. It was a brilliant profusion of plants, animals, and light. I don't know if he said it or I did, but the words came,

“God is life.”

A three-word answer complete with illustration [*remember the city of Paris*].

“So the Stoics were right.”

“Yes. Everything we see in the cosmos are forms and parts used in the creation of life.”

I decided not to ask more but just to enjoy the oasis, so I flew (for the first time in UW) above it for a moment or two to enjoy the view. Then, I returned to Jesus and asked if he was going to continue to be my teacher.

“I am.”

“But, I'm not worthy.”

“Yes, you are.”

“Well, I can't imagine why.”

“You will know eventually.”

I didn't want to press the issue, and I could tell it was time for me to go. As I was leaving, I remembered that I hadn't thanked him properly and vowed to apologize next time.

31 MAY 17: Wednesday: 0630-0655: UW—4:

Jesus did not appear when I came and called. After drumming and waiting awhile I decided to say what I came to say even if I spoke to no one but myself.

“Jesus, having you as my UpperWorld teacher would be concrete proof in MiddleWorld that I am not just eccentric or weird but certifiably insane. I'm willing to accept that condemnation if you have an important message for the world. If you do, then I'm willing to be a bearer of that message. But, I have no illusions about what that would mean for my life. It would destroy my identity, everything I am and all the work I had done with the Stoics. I'm willing to pay that price, because anything you have to say to the world would probably be more important than I am or anything I had done.”

However, I also wanted some assurance that I was ending my current life for the *real* Jesus of Nazareth, not some impostor or figment of my imagination. To that end, I wanted to ask a question—the answer to which I didn't have even a speculative idea.

“What is dark matter,” I asked? “If this was an inappropriate question, then you can choose another question that would reveal some aspect of nature about which I also know nothing.”

I drummed awhile and wandered through the dust and rubble waiting for Jesus to appear. When I was certain he wasn't coming, I left.

01 JUN 17: Thursday: 0615-0640: UW:

Because Jesus didn't appear last time I was uncertain about our relationship, so I went to each level, 1 to 4, and asked for a teacher. On the 4th level Jesus *gradually* appeared. I explained the gist of what I had said yesterday about the difficulty of having him as my teacher, but that I still wanted to know about dark matter. I also said that if it was some area of knowledge that required another teacher, just for that question, then could he introduce me to that teacher? It seemed to me that a being as evolved as Jesus presumably is he would either know the answer or know someone who did.

Jesus said nothing but began walking into the wasteland. I followed after him and said that perhaps the question was related to his answer about God, because where there was life there was light and color and a bounty of organic life forms. He kept walking, and I followed. I thought maybe he was taking me to see another teacher, but he eventually stopped. We stood together silently when suddenly a little fire appeared on a stone altar in front of him. He rubbed his hands together over the fire as if warming them.

“It's the Spirit World,” Jesus said at last.

When he said it, my immediate reaction was, “Of course!” Dark matter was almost everything, more than 90% of the universe as we currently know it. Astrophysicists think that it exists, but at this time, they have no way of measuring or experimenting with it. So, it's essentially unknown. When he said that dark matter was the Spirit World it seemed so obvious that it was beyond doubt. These thoughts brought me to a follow up question.

“Then is dark matter the Empty Sky of my first Great Insight?”

“Yes,” he said.

I got the impression he was not just in the dark matter spirit world but he was made of it. However, on this no words were spoken. Then, I remembered my earlier question about God.

“So, if God is life, then what is dark matter? What you showed me was God of the visible world, the MiddleWorld.”

“In the Spirit World the question, what is God, is meaningless.”

I'm not sure how, but my mind was guided to the understanding that everything was God. Following that thought, I remember a saying I learned in graduate school many years before, "If everything is art; nothing is art," but I didn't want to specifically address that in relation to the God matter.

[In 1917, Marcel Duchamp's sculpture, "Urinal" that was simply a urinal, first inspired this saying about art. He was a man of integrity in that once he became convinced that anything with an artist's signature had now become art in the modern art world he retired from doing art and spent the rest of his days playing chess.]

I began to get restless. I felt I had heard as much as I could manage to process in my mind at one time. But a couple of other thoughts came up.

"If the Spirit World is the dark matter, then this is where we go when we die?"

Jesus confirmed my conjecture. So, astrophysicists studying the dark matter conundrum are trying to measure and investigate the Spirit World and most contemporary scientists, the Confessional Atheist types, those for whom science was a religion, would be horrified to even think such a thing.

"Is journeying the only way to gain access to the Spirit World," I asked?

"No, but it's a good one," he said.

I couldn't think of anything more to say, so I asked if there was something I had forgotten. He said there was and came over to give me a hug. We hugged. I thank him and began my return. For the first time, Jesus remained visible and stood watching as I returned to MiddleWorld.

02 JUN 17: Friday: 0630-0647: UW—4:

I went to see Jesus for the express purpose of asking about using his name in this book, *A Monastery of One*. First, I thanked him with deep gratitude for yesterday's information, then I told him of my concern about using his name, either in personal conversations or in this book. With respect to personal conversation he told me to just use my own discretion, and as for the book I should use his name freely. I wanted to confirm what he said, so I asked it another way.

I told him that I would be at considerable risk of ridicule if I used his name instead of, for example, The Teacher or Sensei, but that I would take it and deal with it if that's what would be best. I reminded him that his was probably the most famous name in history, and that I couldn't imagine he needed more fame, so there must be a reason for it.

"Yes," he said. "You will know the reason in time."

Later Commentary:

Many intelligent, well-meaning people would consider this story of Jesus to be complete crap. In their place I probably would too. Fundamentalist and evangelical Christians will believe I am talking to Satan—and I may or may not know it. Scientists and Psychologists will probably think I'm insane. Having Jesus' name associated with the dark matter as Spirit World issue makes my situation exponentially intensified. Dark matter was only accepted as existing in the last 20 years, and to identify it with the Spirit World is a huge step into the future – what kind of future I can't even imagine. If this book is read far and wide such a theory will be subjected to opinions of outrage strengthened by indignation. Am I ready for this?

Am I a purveyor of superstition and lunacy? Is there any difference between what I'm doing in the Spirit World and killing bald men to look for gold in their heads in Mozambique? Well, it is less violent, I suppose, but let's be honest—how do Mozambique beliefs and my claims differ? How does either fantasy appear to anyone with a skeptical turn of mind, the kind of mind I have and have always treasured? I can hear the comments now:

["Incredible! This guy talks to Jesus. Really. No, he doesn't pray to Jesus as a devout Christian might do, he goes into a Spirit World somewhere and has actual conversations with the original Jesus of Nazareth who now lives in a place Shamans call the Upper World. And get this! Jesus is telling him stuff like: God is life, but that it only really applies to the Middle World, because in the spirit world the concept of God is meaningless. Then, if that doesn't blow you away, Jesus identifies this so-called spirit world with what astrophysicists have recently identified as Dark Matter. So, in other words, more than 90% of the universe is actually the Spirit World where Jesus lives and where we all go when we die."]

Yes, some thing or one who calls himself Jesus has told me several insightful things. I really don't know how I got these messages to the questions I have wondered about most of my life. I don't know why my Upper World teacher is Jesus, of all people. I don't know why he would choose me to talk to. And, I don't know how it is that I have received more information of a spiritual and cosmological nature in the last 3 months than I did in the preceding 33 years. I guess I was old enough to receive it. But the question remains: who or what sent it?

The difference between having a Great Insight and Shamanic Journeying is significant. The Great Insight is a realization and some strong feeling of rightness and surety. Journeying is journeying. One goes places and see things, hears things, and sometimes is contradicted. It seems most of the time I am surprised by the answer given. If it were just me making up some fantasy how would I be so frequently surprised by the direction the journey takes me? I go places I didn't expect to go, and I see and hear things I didn't expect to see and hear.

In my journeys it's obvious a story is being told, but I don't know what it is, where it's going, or how it ends. This is highly motivating to me, and I intend to see it through. I'm not looking for any new insights from the Middle World NOR-mystic. If they come, they come. Right now, I'm focused on The Story. I'm going to continue my shamanic practice pursuing cosmology instead of healing. My progress seems good. In addition to the broad brushstrokes I will be looking for more detail. If all this drives me mad, then I guess my father was right. "You're next," he said.

Helen Schucman

[Being neither a follower of Oprah Winfrey nor of New Age ideas or movements I had never heard of a Helen Schucman. The first time I read Walsh's Spirit of Shamanism I didn't even notice the reference to her. It was in a section on mediumship and channeling, neither of which are of much interest to me. In preparation for my work with the text on the Three Worlds and the shaman background I reread parts of Walsh's book and "discovered" this reference to Helen Schucman. It got my attention this time, because he called her a "reluctant" channeler, which reminded me of my reluctant relationship with Jesus. I Googled Helen Schucman, and it turns out that she was a Professor of Psychology at Columbia Medical School and an atheist Jew who without warning began to get these messages from someone who called himself – Jesus.

I went online to Amazon and bought the original book she channeled, A Course in Miracles. I just got it yesterday, about 1000 pages in length, and I'm going to read it so that I can confirm or disagree with her Jesus compared to mine.

Later. Okay, I've glanced at it, skimmed a few chapters, and so far I really dislike the Biblical language and tone of the thing. I felt like I was actually reading the Bible. Very much like a church sermon. I'm not sure how much of this I can stomach.

I Googled Helen Schucman again for more information and found that it took her seven years of channeling to come up with the primary text. There is also a big section on study material for students, including versus to be read every day for 365 days. There's also a smaller section that serves as a teacher's guide. Apparently, there is a whole foundation and institution set up around this information channeled through Schucman from Jesus. And, of course, there are websites by fundamentalist Christians claiming the whole thing is a lie and the work of Satan, the Father of Lies.

Schucman did not want her name associated with this work and didn't allow the release of that information until after her death. She died of Pancreatic Cancer at the age of 71—younger than I am. Not admitting she was the channeler was understandable. I have the same inclination, and I don't have the same lofty position in society she had. That is, she was a Psychology professor at a major university in New York City, an atheist, and a Jew. What would her colleagues and friends think? How embarrassing for her professional, social, and family life.

Every day I wonder why I should go forward with this book of mine. I don't need this grief. I'm not an atheist like Helen Schucman, but I am a Pyrrhonian Skeptic at heart, and I have a comfortable life doing work with the Stoic community that is meaningful to me. Do I really want to risk it all for someone and something that is so difficult to believe?

I finally decided I needed another Teacher. The whole Jesus thing ate away at the Pyrrhonian side of me so much that I decided if I was going to continue my work in shamanism I had to seek another contact in the Upper World. I discussed this with Jesus on a journey to UW, explaining that unless there was some essential reason why he had to be my teacher I would be looking for another. I apologized for my lack of faith, thanked him for his patience, then said I would be available anytime he needed to get in touch with me. He said nothing.

Two months later I changed my mind. Again.]

08 AUG 17: Tuesday: 0557-0616: UW—4:

Met Jesus without difficulty, and without preamble began with a question.

“What is the purpose of life?”

“To ask such a question must account for our understanding that life is God. We must know that there are many faces of God, figuratively speaking, and life in MiddleWorld is just one of them. So, what is really being asked is what is the purpose of MiddleWorld. The short answer is to know itself. Life is God knowing itself as corporeal existence. Thus, to 'Know thyself' as a human is to know God as a human, because we are all manifestations of God.”

I continued drumming and thought about what Jesus said.

“Your explanation seems reasonable but not really original.” I wasn't trying to be difficult or critical, I just felt like there must be more.

“Is there some deeper insight, something I wouldn't have thought up on my own?”

“Listen to the drum,” Jesus said. “Clear your mind and listen to the drum.”

I did as I was told and felt myself go into deep meditation. Nothing. Just emptiness. Then,

suddenly, the words came to me;

“Life is the heart of God.”

My first reaction was, how can that be so? Whereupon my mind was flooded with the answer.

“All of the conditions of life in a dynamic continuum are felt through the heart—joy and sorrow, ecstasy and depression, fear and confidence, and so on. For reasoning creatures, such as humans and others, it begins as a feeling which is then rationalized by the mind. The feeling is felt, then named and categorized, because that's what reasoning creatures as God would do. As for birds and fish and plants their feelings are experienced directly and responded to directly without the intervening rational process. It's all God.”

I was so profoundly grateful for this information that I actually went down on my knees with my forehead on the ground at his feet. He laughed and picked me up. We hugged, and the drum called me away. I waived as I left. He smiled as he watched me go.

24 AUG 17: Thursday: 0609-0635: UW—4:

Met Jesus. He was talking to several others, but when he saw me he excused himself and came over to where I was standing. He took me by the arm and we walked awhile in the wilderness. Eventually we sat down on two large rocks.

“What is my true purpose in life,” I asked?

He didn't answer right away, so I just let the question dangle there and listened to the drum. Then he, or we, answered the question by defining some things. I say, “he or we” because my brain was doing the reasoning, but I'm not sure which one of us put the information in there. I think it was Jesus, so I'm going to put it in quotation marks.

“Here's how it works. You have true purpose, life lesson, and destiny. These define the individual's life in MW. The true purpose is why you're here, the reason you were born. The life lesson is how you achieve this purpose, and the destiny is the outcome. So, you have the goal, how you achieve the goal, if you do, and the result of what was done, destiny. It's important to note that the destiny may occur in the individual's lifetime, or it may continue and actually reach fruition years after the person's death.”

Jesus then told me my true purpose, life lesson, and destiny, but this information will not be included here.

01 SEP 17: Friday: 0555-0617: UW—4:

I needed to talk to Jesus about Helen Schucman. I needed to explain my difficulty with her seven years of channeling Jesus material. Jesus appeared almost immediately. He looked good, clear, serene, friendly, but still as I remembered him from my childhood images.

“Why did you tell Schucman the stuff she channeled and wrote in that book, *A Course in Miracles*?”

“I didn't. It's not like I was whispering in her ear for seven years.” He went on to explain that her subconscious mind made a connection to the Akashic consciousness of Jesus material. This is how it's done. The subconscious mind connects with the greater consciousness and interprets it according to the construction or composition of that particular individual's subconscious mind. Hers had been fed a lifetime of scientific material. It apprehended that aspect of the Akashic consciousness that exists as Jesus of Nazareth.

“Her mind was all detail and science,” he said. “You are a storyteller. Your perceptions will be different.”

“Why would an atheist Jew or a Pyrrhonian Stoic seek out the consciousness material of Jesus?”

As soon as I asked the question the answer that came to me seemed obvious. Both of us had learned about Jesus at a very early age. She learned from a Southern Baptist nanny she had as a child, and I learned about Jesus beginning in the cradle from my fundamentalist parents. She grew up and taught herself to be an atheist; I grew up and made the commitment to be a Stoic. But, each of our subconscious minds continued to view Jesus as a great man, the greatest our child mind knew.

01 JAN 18: Monday: 0605-0628: UW—2:

I wanted to speak with Heraclitus to ask him one of the most difficult questions I know. I was going to remind him of a fragment we have of his that says, “To God all things are fair and good and right, but men hold some things wrong and some right. I wanted to point out that if this is a true description of MiddleWorld reality, why would anyone voluntarily choose the path of virtue (*aretē*)? Why create and preserve a noble character? Why be a Stoic? Why discipline and chain oneself to the cardinal virtues.

Look at a man like Donald Trump, I was going to say. He is the living antithesis of everything I believe about how we should conduct ourselves. The Treasures—beauty, truth, and love—he spits on them. Everything about him is ugly; he is perhaps the most habitual liar who ever existed; and other than his extreme narcissism he only knows greed and lust. And yet, he is a billionaire and the most powerful man in the world. Yes, his day is filled with one screaming temper tantrum after another, but would he trade his life for mine? Extremely doubtful. What joys can the life of a humble Stoic philosopher offer a psychopath like Donald Trump?

This is what I wanted to ask Heraclitus, but he never appeared, so I decided to ask Jesus.

02 JAN 18: Tuesday: 0548-0610: UW—4:

Jesus appeared almost immediately upon arrival, and without fuss or drama gave the answer to the question I wanted to ask Heraclitus yesterday.

“Life and death are also on a continuum of opposites, and both are fair and good and right.” Then he talked about the evolution of the species and how we are strengthened individually and collectively when we must strive to overcome obstacles. He gave the obvious example of the salmon swimming upstream and overcoming great obstacles to return to their place of origin to spawn. Only the strongest survive and thereby pass on this strength to their species when they lay their eggs and die. We need difficulties to test us and thereby make us stronger.

“It has nothing to do with heaven or hell when you die; it’s all about what kind of human being you evolve to become. Do you become stronger or succumb to the pain and hardship and become weaker. Donald Trump is a perfect example of one who tests humanity, and by being the living antithesis of beauty, truth, and love he has inspired great challenges of strength and courage from all who oppose him. America is being tested; the human race is being tested.”

23 MAR 18: Friday: 0608-0638: UW—4:

For the first time since journeying to UW—4, the terrain wasn’t simply a dystopian wasteland of dust and rubble. It was dark, which was usual for this level, but this time I was standing on a mountain. I could see trees and bushes, and at the base of the mountain I could see the lights of a city spread out as far as I could see—all the way to the horizon. It looked like a night time panorama of Los Angeles.

I didn't see Jesus at first, but when I did he was about 100 feet tall. Very impressive, He was standing at the crest of the mountain, about 50 feet away and elevated from where I was standing. As I was wondering what was going on there appeared a kind of light, a shaft of light like a laser beam streaming above and below, emanating from his head and feet as far into the universe as I could see. This was the power of Jesus.

I waited and watched this demonstration of who he is and what he represents in the cosmos until it subsided in a few minutes. Then, we stood together as we usually do and looked out over the vista of night lights in front of us. Neither of us said anything about this display of who he is and what he represents. I remembered Black Eagle's comment about Jesus being the most powerful shaman who ever lived on Earth.

I didn't know what to say, so I began to ask the mundane questions I had brought to UW with me. I felt a little silly doing it, but

[Three months later. Jesus and I had not been talking much, hardly at all. I was busy with others and didn't feel like we had anything more to say to each other. I began to feel like an ingrate, and, frankly, I missed him.]

21 JUN 18: Thursday: 0609-0639: UW—4:

Intent: Reconnect with Jesus and try to understand our relationship.

Realization. Jesus appeared. We sat in the wasteland, facing each other, a small fire with only ashes remaining between us. I talked about a lot of things going on in my life. Jesus said nothing. At first I was a little annoyed, but gradually I realized that much of his role as a Master was to just listen. Sometimes all we need is to be able to share our innermost thoughts and feelings with someone we can trust. But, why do I trust him? Because Jesus came into the world to change the rules. To change the rule of the head to the rule of the heart. He shifted the emphasis and softened the hardest hearts. This is the shaman's heart I asked for more than a year ago without even knowing what I was asking for or what he was giving.

* * * *

Chapter 23: Jenghis Khan (1162-1227)¹

UpperWorld Record Locator #2:

- 01-3 JUL 17: Jenghis Khan and the Spirit World
- 12 JUL: Love
- 13 JUL: Cosmology outline
- 12 OCT: Fear is a bad habit
- 18-19 OCT: More cosmology
- 24 OCT: Death
- 26 OCT: The Cowboy
- 27 OCT: Consciousness
- 31 OCT: Survival of Consciousness
- 07 NOV: Dark Matter, Loneliness, Evolution
- 14 NOV: Consciousness and Soul
- 17 NOV: Consciousness and the Daimon
- 23 JAN 18: The Rich
- 25 JAN The Carnegie Rule

I needed to find a new teacher, or another teacher in UpperWorld. Three months after my "initiation" my deeply rooted aversion to the Jesus thing overwhelmed me, and I never wanted to go back to level 4. I didn't know if Jenghis Khan would consent to be my teacher, but I needed to ask. I didn't know where he was, but I intuitively expected him to be on level 5 or above. None of the other levels I had been to seemed right—certainly not level 4.

For years I have considered Jenghis to be a great man, one of the greatest, and not the monster depicted in western cultures. I have a copy of a painting of him commissioned by his grandson, Kublai Khan, wearing the clothing and serene gaze of a sage. It hangs with my other icons on a wall in my monastery of one, and I greet him, along with Athena, Black Eagle, and Perfect wa, at the beginning of every day. [Later. These icons change according to the current evolution of my practice.]

It's impossible to know with any great accuracy what Jenghis Khan was like. Most of my appreciation for him is based upon research done by Jack Weatherford, Professor of Anthropology at Macalester College in Minnesota. His book, Jenghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World, is one of the most informative books I have ever read. He shows how deeply the prejudice ran against the Mongols in Jenghis's day and for centuries afterward, even to the naming of retarded children, "Mongoloids" in the 19th century.

¹ According to Jack Weatherford's great work, Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World (Three Rivers Press, 2004) pp.65-6, the Mongol name for their leader was likely Chinggis Khan, but the West adopted the Persian spelling of Genghis. I have compromised by spelling his name the way it should be pronounced: Jenghis.

There are two primary reasons for the lies and distortions about Jenghis: profound fear by western societies because he and his cavalry of 150,000 archers appeared unstoppable, and because of Voltaire. Voltaire felt mistreated by his king Louis XV and wrote a sustained allegory about the king using Jenghis to describe Louis. None of things he wrote about Khan factually portrayed his character. None. It did describe Voltaire's opinion of Louis XV, but the western world ignored the literary device and accepted it as historical facts about Jenghis.

There was another reason literate people of western Europe, the rich and powerful, the ones who read and wrote history, were so horrified of Khan. He didn't like them. Early in his career as a conqueror, he discovered the rich and powerful were untrustworthy, and the minute his back was turned after conquering a city they would attempt to destroy him (as any Machiavellian prince would do). So, he decided they were expendable. As soon as he entered a conquered city, he would ask the citizens to bring out their overlords, which they were only too happy to do. Then, he would kill them--quickly and mercifully. (Unlike western princes he abhorred torture.) Then, to everyone's surprise, it was discovered society didn't really need them after all.

Here are a few reasons to like Jenghis Khan: torture was not allowed; he reduced taxes by 50% in every city he conquered—with doctor, teachers, and priests paying no taxes at all; religious tolerance was enforced by law; he completely destroyed the great scourge of the Middle East, the Hashishin, from which we get the word, assassin; and, he had one law code for rich and poor alike—a form of equality that was unheard of in his day. That doesn't include the fact that he also was the greatest conqueror who ever lived. The reach of Jenghis so far exceeded Alexander the so-called Great, that Alex's accomplishments were clearly second-rate by comparison.

*On Friday, **30 JUN 17**, I journeyed to UpperWorld to speak with him. Yes, he was on level 5, but it was mostly dark, faint and fleeting, and I didn't get very far into the journey, because all I could hear were the words, “So much killing, so much killing.” Someone, maybe Jenghis, said this over and over, and I got the impression that it was all he knew. I left and didn't journey over the weekend. By Monday, I was ready to try again.*

03 JUL 17: Monday: 0626-0651: UW-5:

When I met Jenghis Khan he was sitting in an oriental garden, looking just like the image of the Jenghis as a sage I have on my monastery wall. I introduced myself and explained why I admired him and wanted to learn from him. Frankly, I had never thought much about “all the killing.” I was aware of it, of course, but I focused less on that and more on his exceptional abilities as a conqueror and as a ruler of a vast empire with fairness and generosity unheard of in his time (even in our time for that matter). I asked if he would answer a couple of questions about the Spirit World (SW). He said he would.

“Dark matter appears dark to us. Jesus said it was the Spirit World. If that is the case, then is SpiritWorld a dark place?”

“It isn't dark. We make our own light, but the light of spirit beings is invisible to you in MiddleWorld.”

“Does it ever seem empty or lonely or boring?”

“No. There are billions of souls, and the history of everything is here. We can move in any direction in time from past to present, and we can revisit and reexamine any situation and lesson we were supposed to learn in our many lives.

“Hell is not a place, but a lesson, learning the lessons of the life we lived. People aren't physically burned by any pain they caused in their life. They are able to have a dual perspective of the MW and SW existence. This shows them what they must do to restore a kind of balance to the soul. For example, one who has caused a lot of pain in MW in their last life may return to be a healer in a next life.”

“Thank you,” I said. “Can I return to ask more questions on future journeys.

“Yes.”

“I have read that loyalty was extremely important to you when you were Jenghis Khan. Would you be offended if I learn from others in both UW and LW.”

“No. You should learn from whomever you can wherever you are.”

After a number of LowerWorld journeys, nine days later I returned to UW-5.

12 JUL 17: Wednesday: 0616-0634: UW—5:

Jenghis was in the garden again appearing as he did before. Without preamble I asked my question.

“What is love?”

“Look into my eyes,” he said.

I looked into his eyes and saw the night sky with stars. I didn't understand, so I looked again. Same thing. Three times I looked into his eyes, then I got it.

“Life! Love is life in both Spirit World and MiddleWorld.”

“Yes.”

I pressed further.

“So, how does love become life?”

“Attraction. It's a physical law that all things in the universe, organic and inorganic, are bound by a physical law of attraction.”

“So, then, this attraction holds everything together similar to the Pneuma of the Stoics?”

“Yes.”

“Is that the origin of the saying, 'God is love,' because God is life?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that makes sense for MW, but what about SW? Is there love in SW?”

“Yes.”

At this point, I felt like I didn't quite get it; something was missing.

“Evolution,” he said. “In both SW and MW there is evolution, because part of the attracting power of love is attraction to the beauty of perfection. It is both attraction and striving, and because of these aspects of love all things evolve, including God, love, Plato's theory of forms, all of it.”

I remembered the LW journey where I went into the Renovo Canyon cave and saw evolution in action [*journey not included in this book's LW record*].

“Without the original attraction of one part to another, the universe would not exist. Thus, love or whatever name you want to give it, was the origins and reason for the creation of the cosmos. That's how it began. That's how God came into being. From random parts, seen and unseen, some

accidentally came together. These beginning combinations ran into other random parts and eventually the universe as you know it came into being. Whether these random parts of the universe were anything like we now know is unlikely, because what we see and conceive is highly evolved compared to the beginning.”

Afternoon commentary: MW:

I don't know how this information was communicated by Jenghis. Words and thoughts simply came into my head without ever seeing him speak. These were my words and not my words. They were my words in trying to explain a concept that became apparent when it became apparent. Perhaps a more intelligent person could have seen other dimensions I was incapable of grasping. For example, the idea of the way things are attracted to each other, and why, is vague and not well-defined in my mind. This may presuppose some knowledge of physics I simply don't have—which is why I thought of the Stoic concept of Pneuma.

A well-informed Stoic knows that Pneuma is divine and that it holds all parts together in their own individual integrity according to the amount of Pneuma in each thing. Someone who was more knowledgeable in contemporary physics may have seen another entirely different sort of attraction theory. Is there any significant difference between calling an attraction of parts to one another love, rather than war? Does it rest with the perspective of the viewer? If we set aside emotion and anthropomorphizing everything, is there still a difference between the two? Yes. One is like the attraction of magnets and the other is more like the pushing and shoving of conflict.

I obviously needed more information from Jenghis.

13 JUL 17: Thursday: 0555-0619: UW—5:

Once again, Jenghis was in his garden. I thought maybe if I started at the beginning I could understand his previous comments about love as the beginning of everything. I asked,

“Why is there something, anything in the cosmos, rather than nothing at all? For the seen and unseen universe to come into being there had to be something. What was it and why did it exist?”

“Why there is something rather than nothing is an 'imponderable,' but in the beginning something existed and it was one thing,” Jenghis answered, then continued.

“Then, the one thing became two things, the visible and the invisible. Why the one became the two, it's opposite, is the next imponderable. We can only speculate, such as a desire for self-awareness, but here we can only make up a likely story.

“When the one thing became the two things, the parts were separated into the visible and the invisible, but the invisible was still something. The visible became the corporeal world, MW, while the invisible became the Spirit World, and each was in a very primitive state of being. Each evolved to become what it is today.

“The attraction comes from a desire to be one again. This is what is called love. The parts seek to combine, to return to the original state of oneness. This we know as pure love. Romantic love would be the desire to merge two people into one.

“The feeling of love is a kind of ecstasy that permeates all things in the desire of all parts to return to the original state. The one is the divine, made up of the visible and invisible, all things moving, evolving, regenerating, procreating, experimenting, and all of this is based upon all parts in their attraction to all other parts. In a state of mystical ecstasy we can 'see' the oneness of all things and feel the ecstasy of pure love.”

I had to leave to write this down before I forgot it.

Afternoon commentary, a summary: MW:

It appears there are four imponderables:

- Why there is something rather than nothing
- Why the One becomes two
- How does the One become many (One tears itself apart, then further explodes into the many)
- Why do all parts desire to be one again (the foundation of human yearning, from romantic love to spiritual devotion)

12 OCT 17: Thursday: 0554-0611: UW—5:

When I arrived Jenghis was on horseback wearing rough wool and leathers instead of the white sage's robe. We appeared to be on the Mongolian Steppes, his homeland, and a horse was saddled and ready for me. We rode at a walk as I talked to Jenghis, thanking him for his information about the nature of love in our journey three months earlier. I told him I didn't really understand it until I later saw a BBC documentary about the elements and how they seek each other out. They even used the phrase, "marriage between hydrogen and oxygen" when discussing water. Then I confessed,

"I need to work on courage."

"Fear is mostly a bad habit of mind. You break it just like any other bad habit. Just stop it!"

18 OCT 17: Wednesday: 0545-0600: UW—5:

The Steppes. Jenghis was on horseback. I joined him. He had an eagle on his arm; I had Owl on mine. Bear walked beside us. I had prepared more questions:

"Should I journey less often? That is, do I wear out my welcome in the Spirit World by coming too often?"

"It doesn't matter to the SW; it's entirely up to what you need to do."

"Jesus said that when I journey I'm not actually speaking to him directly, that I'm connecting my subconscious to the Jesus consciousness of SW. Is that what I'm doing with you?"

"Yes."

"Earlier your description of love as a physical law of attraction of various parts of the universe to other harmonious parts was confirmed by a nature documentary I saw. If this is true universally with both organic and inorganic parts of the Whole, where does or how does the *feeling* of love happen?"

"The same as with the feeling of attraction to beauty. This is how MW is created and recreated."

"Then, is there any way we can request from Nature or SW or any source the attraction of money or healing or anything we need in our lives to come into our lives? Is this actually possible, this phenomenon some call the 'Law of Attraction?'"

"That's a question for another time."

We rode on awhile in silence, then I knew it was time to go. I thanked him, and he disappeared. For a brief time I was alone on the Steppes with Owl and Bear.

19 OCT 17: Thursday: 0626-0647: UW—5:

Riding on the Steppes. I didn't know exactly what I was going to talk about until I was in the

midst of my climb up the golden ladder to level 5.

“What is beauty. What does it come from and why does it exist?” I asked.

“Evolution. Beauty is a force in nature similar to love's attraction. Love creates, recreates, and makes things work through the great variety of attractions, such as hydrogen's attraction to oxygen creating water.

“Beauty is an attraction to perfection. And, yes, it is in the 'eye of the beholder.' There's a kind of striving that comes with our attraction to beauty that causes evolution. When a man is attracted to the beauty of a car, a horse, a woman, he strives to be better, to be worthy. Both beauty and love involve a form of attraction. The same is true of the individual self as well as an entire culture. All existence is evolving, and all evolution is striving for perfection. That's the power of beauty as a force in Nature.”

“Where does this force come from? Why are we attracted to beauty and strive to evolve?”

“God. That *is* God, That is what God is and does. We are God, and all parts of God evolve from a certain basic structure, foundation, framework that exists at the beginning. And, the Doctrine of Seminal Reasons starts the process of evolution. In short, love is a force of bonding, and beauty is a force of evolution. Both are energized by attraction.”

“Is this why I tend to be 'unlucky' in making money, but invariably find myself attracted to subjects and ideas that tend towards cosmology and the Spirit World?”

“Yes. The individual's talents and life force can be compared to a chemical element. Some naturally bond, like H₂O, and some are strangers to one another, like H₂O and oil. If a person is water and another person or occupation is oil, then they will not get along. They may occupy the same space, or an adjoining space, but they will be strangers and never really understand each other. That's why the advice of so many sages to follow your heart is correct. Of course, if your heart values reason above all, then following your heart means following your head. Be who you are. Stoic philosophy will help you live with the consequences if you are a square peg stuck in a round hole.”

24 OCT 17: Tuesday: 0558-0617: UW—5:

When I once again walked out into the Mongolian Steppes no one was there to greet me. After walking alone for awhile listening to the drum I saw a yurt. I opened the flap, and Jenghis and a woman, perhaps his wife, were sitting inside. He welcomed me and told me to sit with him by the open fire pit, then motioned for the woman to get me some back tea with mare's milk. I told him I wanted to talk about death. At this point, my eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness inside the yurt, and I could see others in there with us. As I looked more closely the interior of the yurt began to expand, and I saw many more people, presumably spirits from UW.

“What do you want to know about death?” Jenghis asked.

I stumbled around, my thoughts were unclear, but I said something about, first, was there an afterlife? And, second, what was it like? I wanted more than a description. I wanted to actually see it.

Jenghis affirmed there was an afterlife, but he hesitated about the request to see it. I suddenly became uncomfortable, and just as suddenly he and I were outside the yurt, just the two of us, on horseback riding side-by-side at a walk.

“You can't see your future because it hasn't happened yet. Journeying is based upon memory and imagination. You can't *journey* into death because you are still alive.”

We suddenly came to a deep ravine.

“If you really want to see what death is like jump into the ravine and you will know. Death is your future, not your past, so you have no way of 'seeing' it.”

Implicit in his statement was the realization that I was not allowed (not by edict, but by laws of MW) to see past forms of death prior to this life.

“But I can journey to places where I have never been in MW, why not in SW,” I protested.

“You have never journeyed to places that you have never seen,” he said.

“What about right here and right now? I've never been riding a horse next to you on The Steppes, how can I see it?”

“You have seen pictures of The Steppes, yurts, and you have a painting of me. You have ridden horses. Each element of the scene you are in is part of present memory. The scene comes together by *imagination*. Memory plus imagination equals journeying.”

“So, is the same true for my journey to the monastery and monk on the snowy mountain?”
[*this was a LW journey not included here.*]

“Yes. You know what snow, mountain, monasteries, and monks look like. This information is all in your current MW memory. The imagination of your subconscious created the scene.”

“BUT, this is not to say that the experience is meaningless. The scene was created for a reason. The reason was instruction, and the information received from this journey is the important part. The scene is just context, a stage created by the subconscious to transmit information in a manner that would be meaningful to your conscious mind in the present.”

Then he talked about consciousness, that it existed *only* in the present, that all other experience, past and future, exists as an imprint from MW onto the Akashic records.

I was going to ask how this worked, but I felt a bit full of information and decided I would need to journey again to go any deeper into the subject. I reviewed what I had learned to make sure I got it right, then thanked him and left.

26 OCT 17:Thursday: 0620-0638: UW—5:

I took Bear and Owl with me just for the company. I had another question for Jenghis, but when I stepped off of the ladder and onto level 5, I immediately felt that something wasn't right on the Steppes. It was daytime, but the image fragmented, then it was dark as night. The sky was full of stars, but we couldn't see anything of the terrain, so to be safe we just sat down and looked at the night sky.

Bear sat down with me on my left, but Owl flew up and circled overhead until she was out of sight. I didn't sense danger, but Owl with her excellent night vision could keep a lookout for us and let us know if anyone was coming.

Suddenly, I felt as if I was being lifted up by some force. All three of us were being lifted up, and even though there was no pain or any feeling at all except being lifted it was startling, and I momentarily began to resist, but decided to go with it and see what was happening.

We arrived at our destination, apparently. Anyway, the lifting stopped, and it was suddenly daytime on top of Mount Fuji! I looked around, saw the wooden hut on the summit, but I didn't go inside. I wanted to see the top of Mount Olympus, and suddenly we were there. I wanted to see the top of Mount Whitney, and we were there.

We didn't stay long or do anything. I just looked around a moment or two, then we found ourselves back on The Steppes. But it wasn't The Steppes exactly, more like the American West, neither wooded nor desert but still barren. A rider on horseback became visible in the distance, and

shortly he rode up to us. It was a cowboy, a dusty, rugged-looking cowboy right out of central casting for the movies. I asked him his name, and it was something like Matt, short for Matthew. I asked him if I could ask him the question I had come to UW to ask Jenghis Khan. He said it was OK.

“Does my individual consciousness continue on beyond my death?” I used the example of having this same consciousness as a boy, then as a young man, then as an old man, and even though my physical body changed considerably my consciousness was still who I am.

He didn't say anything.

“Do you know the answer to my question?”

“Nope.”

“Well, if you don't know the answer, do you know anyone who does?”

“Nope.”

We both fell silent for awhile. I listened to the drum.

“You should come back another day and ask the question a different way.”

He touched his hat and rode back the way he came without giving me time to ask how I should ask the question a different way. As soon as he vanished, I knew it was time for us to go home.

27 OCT 17: 0623-0645: UW—5:

When I arrived on the 5th level there was a heavenly quality about it. The ground was made up of clouds, and there were angels, robed in white and with wings, walking about. In a moment, Jesus appeared and greeted me. I didn't know what to do or say, but I mumbled something about this being all wrong. I was on the 5th level to speak to Jenghis Khan. Whereupon Jesus and the angels in heaven disappeared, and I was in the oriental garden with Jenghis.

I don't think it was a Chinese garden, exactly, but more like the Japanese gardens I have seen and admired. I was thinking about the difference between a classical English garden and a Japanese garden. Both have great discipline and control, but whereas the English garden controls the plant by bending it to the will of the gardener, the Japanese gardener works on the perfection of the plant itself, the care and grooming of the best the plant can be. At least that's how I see it.

While I was thinking about this I noticed printed in the sky many times the words, “What is consciousness? What is consciousness?” Over and over. I turned to Jenghis and asked,

“What is consciousness?”

“Look at the garden again,” he said.

I did as I was told, and as I did so the garden began to glow. Everything was glowing a yellow white light—rocks, trees, stream, everything was alive and glowing, both organic and inorganic. Jenghis stated the obvious,

“Everything is alive.”

I was trying to relate what I was seeing to my question about consciousness when I found myself on horseback with Jenghis riding together on The Steppes. This time we were galloping, not walking, and it was quite exhilarating. We were not racing each other, and I noticed that my horse and I were keeping a respectful half length behind Jenghis. We soon came to a stream where we stopped the horses to let them drink.

“The horses are conscious of drinking water, but unlike human consciousness they are not evaluating the taste or temperature. They are not thinking at all but simply drinking. They were thirsty, the water is there, and they are drinking.”

Then he made the connection between the glowing garden and consciousness. Everything is

conscious just as everything is alive, but there are different levels and forms of it. He anticipated my next question by saying that, yes, there were forms of consciousness as advanced beyond human beings as we are to the horse.

“So, is the water aware or conscious of the horses drinking it?”

“It is.”

The horses had finished drinking and we were riding on The Steppes again, walking this time. I reviewed everything I had seen to help me remember, then I said everything I had seen was about what happened when we were alive, life. Was there consciousness after death? Presumably there was if he was actually there speaking with me.

“But is it the same? Does consciousness change in the Spirit World?”

When I looked to him for an answer he was gone. His horse was still there, but he wasn't. We walked together, his horse and mine, then we came to a corral and went inside. I removed both saddles and found some hay.

31 OCT 17: Tuesday: 0632-0650: UW—5:

Jenghis was in the oriental garden as the old sage. After our greeting, I went straight to the point with this question:

“If there is a larger consciousness to which my individual consciousness returns, a cosmic consciousness if you will, then how can my individual consciousness survive the death of the brain? If all the physical matter of my brain dies, rots, or burns away in cremation, how can my individuality remain? My brain has been the tool with which I made sense of the world, as this unique organ perceives it, and once it returns to the organic elements from which it arose, consciousness may remain, but the 'I' that I am in this lifetime does not. So, without that biological attachment to MW, how can I have any point of view at all?”

Jenghis listened, then got up and walked into the garden. I followed. He stopped in front of what appeared to be a stone altar, raising his arms and looking up as if praying to some sky god. Then he bowed deeply, went down on his knees and touched his forehead to the ground. He stood, outstretched his arms again, then back down on his knees. He continued doing this over and over as I watched and tried to understand.

Suddenly we were on horseback on The Steppes. Jenghis was a much younger man and dressed as a Mongol warrior. Then we were back in the garden and he was dressed as a sage in a white robe. Then we were on The Steppes again, then the garden, back and forth several times until he stopped and we remained in the garden. I really didn't know what he was doing or why, so I just listened to the drum and my breath and emptied my mind.

From the silence there arose this thought, repeating itself over and over:

“Information systems.”

Then more thoughts arose;

“Once your brain is dead and has returned to the elements your consciousness joins the larger consciousness. But, the energy of every time period in your life remains (e.g., Jenghis as the young warrior on The Steppes). Nothing really dies. Even now the Big Bang is occurring in its own space and time, and the universe is being born. Instead of being confined to the brain of Erik living in 2017 MW, you now have access to all information of the consciousness of the cosmos—your own and all others.”

There seemed to be more, or a deeper understanding of this, but my brain, the limitation of this brain I carry around, actually felt full, stretched to its limit. I hastily reviewed what I had learned,

then bowed, thanked Jenghis and returned to MW. Once here, I felt a twinge of regret at having to return at all.

07 NOV 17: Tuesday: 0612-0636: UW—5:

I met Jenghis in the garden and reviewed what I had learned several days earlier about consciousness of my self returning to its source, the cosmic consciousness. Then I went on.

“If we can accept what Jesus of Nazareth said about the spirit world as Dark Matter, then what is light and what is dark? If I am, as some people say, a lit-up spirit being, then is the Spirit World basically a dark place lit up by billions of spirit beings flying around?”

“All Dark Matter is light—just as all energy and MW existence, including rocks, are light if we could see the energy of their existence. So it is with the SW as Dark Matter. It's all light, but operating at a frequency or level that is invisible to MW.”

I suddenly felt a sense of loneliness, flying around in a strange place, nothing familiar from MW, just spirits and Dark Matter. Even if there are billions of spirits, it felt to me like how one can feel alone even in a crowded room or on the streets of a bustling city.

“No,” Jenghis said. “Death is the end of loneliness. Death is the end of the MW continuum. In fact, that is what MW is, a continuum, and that's how we learn. In the spirit world the continuum has collapsed, so we know all polarities simultaneously: hot-cold, hard-soft, light-dark, life-death, together-apart. To really understand the apparent distance between the opposite ends of the continuum is how we learn in MW, and when we learn we evolve and grow. Our spirit, which is consciousness, is forced to learn the lesson, or try to, that has been presented to us by living in a plane of existence that separates opposites, which is the existence of MW itself. But, it is the *appearance* that we experience. By having this MW experience the Soul increases in understanding and evolves.”

There was so much information coming in at a rush that I had to stop three times to review in the most general terms an outline of what I was hearing. That is, what my mind in contact with Jenghis, my Teacher, was learning, and I had trouble retaining it. Anyway, this is the best I could reconstruct what I learned from Jenghis in the brain I've got. I reviewed in outline what I learned:

1. Dark Matter
2. Loneliness
3. the Continuum
4. Spirit evolving

I bowed and thanked him for being my teacher.

14 NOV 17: Tuesday: 0555-0610: UW—5:

When I arrived in UpperWorld, I paid close attention to each level as I climbed the golden ladder to UW—5 to see Jenghis. From the earliest construction of civilization (level—1), to the Greco-Roman period (level—2), through the Modern period (level—3), and the wasteland (level—4). When arriving at level—5, I enter an Oriental garden and speak to an Mongolian sage. My UW journeying intuition is that civilization moves from the Middle East, the earliest fortified towns, to the Mediterranean, then to the modern city, which is destroyed, resulting in level—4, the wasteland; and, finally, we enter an Oriental period when Asia rules the world. This seems right, but I don't really know.

I met Jenghis in the garden and immediately asked about the relationship between consciousness and the Soul.

“The Soul is the consciousness of the individual plant and animal. Anything that can procreate can reincarnate, and reincarnation is simply another word for the evolution of that soul. Everything that evolves is a soul in the process of natural perfection.

“A rock has its own form of consciousness. All things are conscious, but the consciousness of a rock is of a very low order and doesn't evolve because it doesn't procreate. Evolution to perfection is a natural process combining consciousness with individual entity or life form. You should not underestimate the consciousness of a mighty redwood tree or wind-swept cypress overlooking the sea. Just because you don't understand it doesn't mean it isn't real.”

17 NOV 17: Friday: 0625-0648: UW—5:

Jenghis was there in the garden. There were other figures moving about, but they ignored us. I had been thinking about the Greek concept of the daimon and my own daimon. These are the questions I asked:

“Do daimones exist? If so, what are they, and do they have an objective existence apart from us? And, are there both good and bad daimones as Diogenes Laertius said [*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* vol. II, VII. 150-151]?”

“Yes, they exist,” Jenghis said. Then he explained how it all goes back to evolution again.

“With experience comes increased understanding. As understanding increases life forms evolve. With evolution comes increased awareness, an expanding consciousness that includes more than the single individual self. We ascend the evolutionary levels of increasing consciousness until we become God, all consciousness. Thus, there is a decreasing sense of individuality as we evolve, because we become more like God until we become God. A daimon is the existence of a larger number of life forms becoming God—all life. This is how something as vast and impersonal can at the same time be a personal god—the Daimon.

“No, there are no evil daimones. Such a thing is impossible. The daimon is a being of greatness, because it can exist as multiple life forms with increasing consciousness. So, the higher we go in awareness the fewer in number or *separate* entities we are. The daimon is both separate from you and is your consciousness—your consciousness and that of an eagle in the sky and a whale in the sea. It communicates its thoughts on occasion and it protects you, really itself, when it's not time for you to be sick, injured, or die. It allows suicide and terrorism when that is the lesson being learned. That could be the source of the Greek idea that there are both good and bad daimones.”

“Are you my daimon,” I asked Jenghis?

“Yes, you are part of my conscious awareness field. So is Jesus.”

Ultimately our awareness field increase until it becomes the awareness of God. It's as if all is darkness, then a small light shines on a tiny segment of primitive life. The light becomes larger, stronger, and more and more of life is seen as consciousness and awareness grows and grows. We are never really separate from anything, only we think we are. And, so it is with daimones. We are part of that older and greater conscious awareness that began at the beginning and continues until we are no longer a part, but the Whole.

23 JAN 18: Tuesday: 0600-0620: UW-5:

I went to see Jenghis to ask about the great and increasing inequality in the world. Must we suffer the arrogance and smug entitlement of our rich rulers forever? Was there something “natural” about this phenomenon, something essential about the human condition, our species, that always

gave a few the means to rule and lord it over the rest of us? I was prepared to remind him that when he was here in MW as a conqueror he killed the aristocrats of the towns and cities he conquered and found that they were unnecessary, nothing more than parasites.

This was my question, and I was ready to ask it when I arrived on the 5th level and saw Jenghis in the garden. As I began to speak, I saw that he was working on a bush of some kind, maybe a chrysanthemum. I had never seen him actually *do* anything before, so I stood silently and watched. He was going around the bush and cutting off the blossoms, just the flowering part of the bush. As he continued to work it occurred to me that he was answering my question even before I asked it.

I struggled to understand exactly what he was communicating, and I'm going to have to think more about this, but the idea came to me that the wealth that came up from the people was represented by the flowering of the bush. The vast majority of us are the stems, branches and leaves. The roots represent Nature, our source, and the flowering of the plant represents just that, the flowering of the people. For us to stop great vision and effort is like cutting off and throwing away the best of what we can be.

I struggled to accept this while I listened to the drum. After all, for every great leader and visionary who inspired the pyramids, Taj Mahal, or Stonehenge there are god-knows-how-many pathological liars and insufferable narcissists like so many that we have in the world today. So, I had trouble with this answer, but I respected it because it came from Jenghis, and decided I needed time to think more about it. I thanked him and left.

25 JAN 18: Thursday: 0611-0638: UW-5:

Returned to Jenghis to continue with the issue of income inequality. Since the last journey, Tuesday, it occurred to me that society can encourage the creation of institutions and empires by not stifling the creator, but justice can also be included by *not* allowing the empire builder to leave it all to his children's inheritance. The wealth should be returned to the society and people who provided the infrastructure and work that transformed the vision into reality. The flowering of a bush is only possible when there is a bush with roots, trunk, branches, leaves, and stems.

When I arrived on the 5th level, I had trouble seeing. There was no garden, no Jenghis, and then we were suddenly riding together on The Steppes. He confirmed my understanding. But then I wanted to know if it was fair to the children of the rich.

"Are they being robbed," I asked?

"No, by having a parent who can build empires, they still receive enormous benefit."

Then he listed the ways the child benefits by having been born into such a family:

1. DNA of the parents
2. Benefit of counsel and example
3. Finest tutors and education
4. Priceless contacts and friends

The child born into such a home already has a far greater chance of success in life than one born into a broken home in a ghetto. We can call this the "Carnegie Rule," because Andrew Carnegie was the greatest example of one who believed inheriting great wealth was wrong and harmful to those who received it. Carnegie, the richest man in the world in his day, made sure his wife and child were financially secure for life, then gave the rest away.

We continued riding on the Steppes, horses at a walk. Jenghis said nothing during this time; I had these thoughts as we rode along, but were they from Jenghis? How did they come to me in this

way? The thoughts continued.

But is it right to legislate philanthropy? Is this something that should be enforced by law, or should it be the subject of shaming and sermons? Laws. Jesus spoke repeatedly about giving to the poor and a few Christians today even practice such charity, but most don't appear to. All his shaming and sermons are ignored by most Christians, even by their leaders and evangelists. Evangelical Christians overwhelmingly support President Trump, the living poster child for everything Jesus preached against. Sermons and shaming have never worked without the enforcement of laws.

No. If it's not a law it will be ignored. Slavery would still be widespread if it were not subject to legal sanction. If it were not illegal, children would still be chained to their workstations 12 hours a day, as they were in the Industrial Revolution, a time when the Christian church ruled everyone and everything in society. Greed is an obsession that knows no bounds, a bottomless pit that knows no morality. As Jesus said, "It takes courage to be compassionate in a world ruled by selfishness and greed."

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Chapter 24: Ockham's Razor

Record Locator:

- 13 APR 18: Honolulu Notes
- 09 MAY: A single step
- 10 MAY: Kwafumi 1
- 11 MAY: Kwafumi 2
- 14 MAY: Kwafumi 3
- 17 MAY: Leaving UW
- 18 MAY: Power Animal's answer

Hope is a beacon. Hope is a light shining in the dark, a light at the end of the tunnel. But for every light, every kind of light, there must be shadows. Hope is no exception. Some of us live and work in the shadows of hope.² We live and work without hope of ever knowing what is real and what is unreal in our journeys into the Spirit World. We can only suspend judgment, record our experience, and carry on.

This chapter is entitled "Ockham's Razor and the Daimon" because it represents the junction or bridge between what we can reasonably believe is real and unreal, ordinary and extraordinary, certain and uncertain. When we pass from deep meditation or shamanic trance, a condition which we can feel and know is really happening, to conversations with our daimon as an external entity, a spirit that is our guide, we are taking a single great leap into the unknown.

What strange religions, what ferocious moralities, what slavish fashions, what sham interests! I can explain it all only by saying to myself that intelligence is naturally forthright; it forges ahead; it piles fiction on fiction . . .

George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, p. 7

Am I "piling fiction on fiction"? One reason I didn't mention for leaving the shamanic healing workshop early (see "Last Time I Drove to LA") was a matter I had difficulty telling myself. Frankly, it seemed like such unmitigated balderdash being pedaled as medical treatment that I simply couldn't accept it. There were a number of these blows to the rationally reasoning mind that caused me to squirm. The next entry is another occasion of doubt that came to me after reading a book on soul retrieval while traveling to visit my brother in Honolulu. I'll quote my journal notes:

13 APR 18: Honolulu: 0345 hours: MW: Notes inspired by a shamanism book:

Read most of a book on soul retrieval. It's about the shamanic work of journeying to find and

² This concept was conceived by the writer, Austin Channing Brown, whose work in countering racism in the USA led to her death of hope, but also made her realize she could and would carry on even in its shadow.

retrieve pieces of a patient's soul that have left it due to some fright or other horrible life experience. The theory is that most of us have pieces of our soul missing because of the difficulties of surviving the frequently outrageous fortunes of MW. If a lot of pieces of soul are missing, it can cause physical or psychological illness. Hence the need for a shamanic practitioner to retrieve the missing pieces.

I have two disagreements, one specific and one general. The author says, “[It is] unethical for one to try a soul retrieval after just reading this book.” Well, OK. Certainly experiencing a number of journeys to UW and LW would be valuable. Then she gets even more indignant at the thought of anyone doing soul retrieval without proper training. “Please do not dishonor yourselves, the people who are important to you, or the spirits by trying soul retrieval without the proper training.”

Unethical? Dishonoring myself, my contacts, and the spirits? How can she say that after writing a book with great detailed descriptions and illustrations, along with numerous case histories explaining exactly how to do this work? Why does my physical presence in an expensive workshop on the other side of the continent make me more qualified to do this? I'm quite sure she has at least as much or more information in her book than she would be able to cram into a weekend workshop of lecture and practice. She doesn't define “appropriate training,” so I'm not sure what she means by that, but as one who has journeyed to UW and LW approximately 200 times and has established relationships with ancestors, teachers, and allies I should have all the information I need to take this book and go to work.

But do I want to? That's my general disagreement. After reading the case histories, I'm questioning the value of soul retrieval as a healing modality appropriate for the 21st century Western consciousness. For one thing, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) practice, which is actually based upon Stoicism, is much more reasonable, and one is much less likely to get lost in magical thinking, or as Santayana would say, “piling fiction on fiction.” Magical thinking may have its place in our world, but I'm wondering if soul retrieval is taking things a step too far.

There is also a “boohoo, poor me” thread running through most of these stories that makes the Stoic in me want to say, “Just get over it, and stop feeling sorry for yourself!” I mean, do little pieces of our soul really run away and hide, permanently, in the Spirit World whenever someone insults us or calls us bad names? Really? It's true there are significant traumas in some of her stories, but the ones I read mostly had a whiny quality that I found tiresome and occasionally revolting. My Stoic reaction, once again, causes me to doubt that I should be involved with shamanic healing at all. If someone has been so traumatized by events in their past that they can no longer function normally, then I think they should seek professional therapy with a CBT therapist or become a Stoic, or both.

I mean, come on, fighting “soul thieves” in the Spirit World? A “Cave of Lost Children” frightened and tearful in LW? No. My credibility has been stretched to the breaking point. I can only fall back on suspending judgment. Rational thought in general is an enemy of certain kinds of shamanism, especially practices like soul retrieval. To preserve one's sanity in work like this, if one is to stay in it, one must be a good Stoic and when in doubt, suspend judgment. If I am to continue in this field I must adopt the attitude of the Pyrrhonean. Pyrrho's greatest innovation as a Greek philosopher was the idea that freedom from mental disturbance (*ataraxia*) could be found by the suspension of judgment (*epoché*). This must become my motto: *Suspend judgment, Experience, Record.*

09 MAY 18: Wednesday afternoon: MW:

Ockham's Razor. Henceforward, my education in shamanism is going to have Ockham's Razor as a ready tool and constant companion. Right now, I am at the stage of Shamanic Trance Meditation

as the first step of credibility on this exploration.

Step One. Shaman Trance Meditation (STM). With this method, I have the ability to go into a trance. Fact. And in this deep meditative state I experience the Ananda euphoria. Fact. The method is a fusion of PnWPM and shamanic journey drumming. Fact.

Step Two. Journey. I can either remain in the real and certain paranormal experience of Step One; or, I can direct the empty mind to be filled with a story. Notice, the “I” in this case [that was going to direct the empty mind] appears distinctly separate from and above the mind it was going to allow to be filled. This represents two minds in the same head: a higher mind and a regular mind. When you add the third mind, you bring in the subconscious mind.

Getting back to Ockham's Razor, I don't want to take tiny steps into the unknown. That is not my nature. I claim the Stoic motto, live in agreement with Nature, and that, I believe, includes our own natures.

STM is the first category in that I can honestly say it is a trance and it appears to be a trance. I'm using a common definition of trance and identify it with certainty, because of repeated experiences of it. Anyone who has not experienced trance can only know it through words, not feeling. It would be like trying to describe being drunk to someone who has never had a drink.

So, how do I carve out the next step using Ockham's Razor and my own nature. I don't want baby steps, but what is the next reasonable step? I have to go from the empty mind of STM to having *something* in my mind. What? I could immediately jump right back into journeying as I did for more than a year, four times per week, but that seems like a step too far. The Razor cannot allow this....

I could take *a single step* of faith, one in keeping with Stoic tradition, and accept the possibility of daimones³ as real entities that guide us, not unlike spirit guides, and these daimon are objectively external and internal with us—as was the well-known daimon of Socrates. Admittedly, this is a big step, one that would be rejected out of hand by some, but I know of no other way to enter the spirit world without first acknowledging that it may exist. If we accept that daimons exist, we are accepting entities with their own personal histories living invisibly beside and within us....

If we are to proceed we must have a prudent guide to the spirit world. What better guide than one's own daimon (aka, spirit guide and guardian angel)? So, the most necessary and essential next step must be one of faith. I believe that it is acceptable and reasonable to suspend judgment and interact with a daimon, a spirit being, as if it were real.

Kwafumi

10 MAY 18: Thursday: 0615-0630: Step One—STM:

INTENT: Step Two: officially meet my daimon.

REALIZATION: I didn't go very deeply into trance, and just about the time I concluded I would need to try again tomorrow, I saw her—the back of her from the shoulders up. I only saw a faint outline—a bald head, necklaces, native African clothing. I wanted her to turn around so I could see her better. She did. She was wearing a traditional, presumably African dress, reddish with some pattern, silver colored, flat necklaces, and she was completely shaved bald. She was very attractive, maybe in her twenties or thirty, tall and slender, maybe Maasai tribe.

³ I prefer the Greek spelling of Daimon to the Roman spelling of Daemon. The Stoic use of that term refers to the Greek concept. Daimon is pronounced “die-moan.”

“Are you my daimon?”

“Yes. I am as I appeared in one of my incarnations.”

With her answer, she told me 1) that she existed, and 2) that she had an existence, a personal history apart from my own, although that may be an assumption. In fact, there's no reason why she couldn't be me in a former life, except that it didn't feel like it.

“What is your name?”

I was pleased to see that she actually talked to me, lips moving, not just telepathic words. But, getting her name out was not easy or immediate. She started with “Kwa...mumble, then Kwa...mumble, then fumi. Kwafumi.”

I don't know why the name didn't just roll off her tongue, but it could be my unfamiliarity with African names. Until she appeared as my daimon, I did not expect to see an African or a woman. In fact, I didn't have any expectation, and I was prepared to see it in any way, shape or form, human or nonhuman—and I didn't know if I would see anything at all. I don't remember Socrates ever spoke of *seeing* his daimon, only of *hearing* its instruction or cautions.

My daimon, Kwafumi, appeared in the environment of an African village with round mud huts with thatched roofs. I have no idea if Maasai live this way or if I simply saw what I remembered of some picture of an African village I may have seen years ago in a *National Geographic* magazine. Anyway, as I drummed my way back to MW and Kwafumi receded from view, she swooped down and picked up a small child, a toddler, cradling it in her right arm.

11 MAY 18: Friday: 0600-0630: SW: Kwafumi:

INTENT: To return to my Daimon as Kwafumi, and ask about proofs—something, anything—that makes the journeying experience real.

REALIZATION: I first saw the African village, then I saw Kwafumi in considerable detail, much more than I usually do of inhabitants of my journeys. I saw her shaved head and face in profile. Very clear. There was a lazy river by the village, and we went there to talk.

“How can I know if you are real,” I asked?

“Proofs and evidence are material world conditions. The Spirit World (SW) is another dimension of reality. The human mind is part of MiddleWorld and only operates in that dimension. But, the more time you spend in SW the better you will understand it—or intuit how it works.”

“What about the reality of the journey I'm seeing right this moment—the river flowing by on my left, mountains in the distance, you sitting on a rock in front and slightly above me?”

“I inspire the idea, and your memory and imagination create the “reality” of the journey. How could it be otherwise? We can only perceive what we know from our material world consciousness. This has always been so for shamans of every time and place.”

The thought came to mind that if the shamans of the past could have imagined the construction of formidable weapons superior to their enemies, then tribal worlds would never have been destroyed by every culture that had slightly better weapons and wanted their land or gold. It appears that shamans are restricted to their time and place precisely because their MW minds were limited not only by their construction but by their cultural paradigm. Memory and imagination are limited by MW consciousness.

14 MAY 18: Monday: 0634-0704: SW: Kwafumi:

INTENT: Learn more about the relationship of the Daimon and the person to whom they are

connected.

REALIZATION: I met Kwafumi in some pasture land near the village. She was tending a herd of cattle grazing nearby. We sat face-to-face under some scrubby umbrella-shaped tree, and there was a small campfire between us. She poked at the fire with a stick while we talked.

First I asked about calling her a Daimon. Was that correct; or was she a Spirit Guide or a Guardian Angel? She said it didn't matter, that different cultures had different names for it—just as they have different names and attributes for their god(s). These differences are the product of the many ways we humans learn about and explain the world to each other.

“Are you a separate entity?”

“Yes.”

“Then, how are we connected.”

“Through the subconscious mind.” She went on to explain that after many lives as human souls, the external world becomes less interesting, less attractive, and the internal world becomes more so. This is the direction of the individual's evolution as a soul. At some point, the individual no longer wishes to incarnate in MW, and they become the Daimon or Spirit Guide. The Daimon's final connection to corporeality, the physical plane, MW, is through the lives of those they “guide.” They can see and know the human's life lesson and time here in this dimension.

“Is there a difference between a Daimon and an Oversoul?”

“The Daimon is a highly evolved soul who has become spirit but with a connection to the physical plane through those who are still living here. The Oversoul is a term that can be used to describe the soul of the human at birth. Before birth we have a knowledge of our origins and connection to the divine, which we never entirely lose.”

In Stoic terms, it is the sage within that is perfect and wise.

“All this hierarchy works like evolution, both in the physical and soul of life. Everything evolves to the One, because it is the One. When you no longer need or want to incarnate into MW, you still have a thread connecting your soul to the old, and that thread is observing, guiding, and guarding souls that remain.”

“I am no longer incarnating, but I'm still connected to the material world through you.”

When I left, I looked back and could see her not as a beautiful young woman, but as an wrinkled, wizened old woman near the end of her life. She was in the same place before the little fire, poking at the embers with a stick.

17 MAY 18: Thursday: 0606-0627: UW—4: JoN:

INTENT: I thought it would be appropriate for me to explain to Jesus of Nazareth what I was planning to do with Shamanic Trance Meditation (STM), that I would not be returning to see him very often, and, then, only when I was in dire need.

REALIZATION: Prior to my morning meditations, at about 0515 hours, after a troubled night wondering how I could continue shamanic work, *if* I should continue this work, and what I should do, the solution came to me. My motto found in Honolulu was to *suspend judgment, experience, record*. This is not unlike the Pyrrhonian motto, *Ou malon*—no more this than that. Unlike modern skeptics the Pyrrhonian continues to search, explore, investigate. I am not by nature a dogmatist or true believer. I am by nature a doubter, but as a Pyrrhonian skeptic I can carry on and continue my work in shamanism.

All this and more I said to Jesus. He said nothing. It was really a courtesy call to explain my

absence and tell him I would be doing STM without journeying unless and until I really needed to speak to him about something I couldn't resolve in MW with my reasoning mind. The Pyrrhonian concept came to me while I was troubled and tired, but fully conscious. It was the kind of work done by a healthy subconscious mind. After considerable struggle to know what my relationship to shamanism should be, my subconscious dug down into a forgotten vault of my memory bank and pulled up the Pyrrhonian knowledge I had accumulated at considerable effort nearly 20 years before.

After numerous bouts of doubt spread out over the past year, I finally know my place in the community of shamans, a Pyrrhonian. And among the disciples of Jesus, he had Doubting Thomas. I am what I am. Jesus said nothing.

18 MAY 18: Friday: 0605-0627: LW:

Intent: As cold as it may sound, this was really a courtesy call to my Power Animals of LW. I wanted to explain that I wouldn't be coming to see them as often, because I was going to do STM as my default practice, except when there was a great need.

Realization: Drummed and breathed for awhile in STM in order to deepen my trance. I came out in LW at my Anasazi home, the cliff dwellings, but only paused a moment before jumping off the cliff as an eagle. I soared over the southwestern desert remembering and seeing places I had been on journeys before. I planned to go to Black Eagle Aerie, our cabin, but instead I came to a more modern home on the side of another mountain with another panoramic view from a deck spanning the width of the front of the building. I had never been here before. I stood there for awhile drumming and listening to my breath.

Without warning or willing it, Bear and Owl appeared on the deck with me. After greetings, I explained the intent of my journey. Bear disagreed with me, calmly, and said that I could come whenever my heart wanted to be with them. He explained that I had included everything in my analysis of journeying except for the heart. I didn't need a *good* reason to come to see them, just being with them was reason enough.

This was unexpected, Bear had been a companion many times, and I had spoken to him many times, but I don't remember him ever speaking to me. I knew what he said was true—once it was pointed out to me. I looked over at Owl. She agreed with Bear. I noticed B.E. For the first time standing at the far end of the deck, some distance from the three of us, and he nodded. I persisted mildly. I told them that while I was exploring Shamanic Trance Meditation, I may be gone longer than usual, and I wanted some assurance they wouldn't leave me. Then, Bear spoke again.

“As long as you love us and care about us, we won't leave you. We *can't* leave you,” he said.

I telepathically understood that it was a law of their world, LW. They won't stop loving me as long as I love them. The words of Jesus came to my mind, “Wherever your treasure is there will your heart be also.” At that, I also remembered Blaise Pascal's quote, “The heart has its reasons of which the reason knows nothing.” Then I remembered my reading and lectures on shamanism where over and over it was emphasized that this was a heart-centered practice.

I hugged Bear and Owl.

Black Eagle and I shook hands.

* * *

Epilogue

17 JUL 18: Tuesday: MW: Today, I finished the first draft of my magnum opus, *A Monastery of One*. By some happy or unhappy coincidence a giant Black Witch Moth (*ascalapha odorata*) chose today to come into the house and settle on the air conditioning unit just above my head where I write. Until today, I had neither seen nor heard of the Black Witch Moth.

It has a range from Brazil to the southern United States. This one probably came up from Mexico, which is only 15 miles away. They fly North when Mexico's rainy season begins. They are high fliers, apparently, and nocturnal—as are most moths. The Black Witch is quite beautiful, actually: dark brown and black with delicate markings, and this one had a wingspan of 6 ½ inches (17 cm). I measured it. The moth looks like a cross between a bird and a bat. And now it's splattered its pee or poop all over a pile of writing notes here on my desk.

I named it “Mothra.”

The Black Witch Moth is universally condemned and is almost always considered a harbinger of bad fortune, usually death. Here are a few of the things popular cultures attribute to this amazing creature. In Mexico and the Caribbean it is considered a harbinger of death. In MesoAmerica it has been associated with death and the number four since preColumbian times. (My personal number has always been number four.) In Jamaica, it is associated with a lost soul that has become a restless ghost. It is known by numerous popular names, including Devil Butterfly, Black Sorcerer, and Mourning Moth. Only in the Bahamas is it ever considered a good omen. There, they are called Money Bats, and you will come into money or win the lottery, *but only if it lands on you*. I didn't find out how often that happens.

I don't believe any of these fears and fantasies. I feel honored to have been visited by the Black Witch Moth on the day I finished my first draft of MOO. What a wonderful ending to the memoir of my life in a monastery of one. But, I know people—college educated, middle class Americans—who would be frightened by this omen. That's the danger of piling fiction upon fiction. That's the danger of imagining things, then believing them and encouraging others to believe them. Superstitious nonsense is the dark side of magical thinking. There is danger in all metaphysical investigations when we don't use our skepticism filter.

20 JUL 18: Friday: 0530: MW: About 5:30 am, I was doing Stick Action Meditation on the back porch. I had the back door open as usual, but this time I was hoping Mothra would realize that its freedom was only a few feet away, and that it had to come out now before the full light of day.

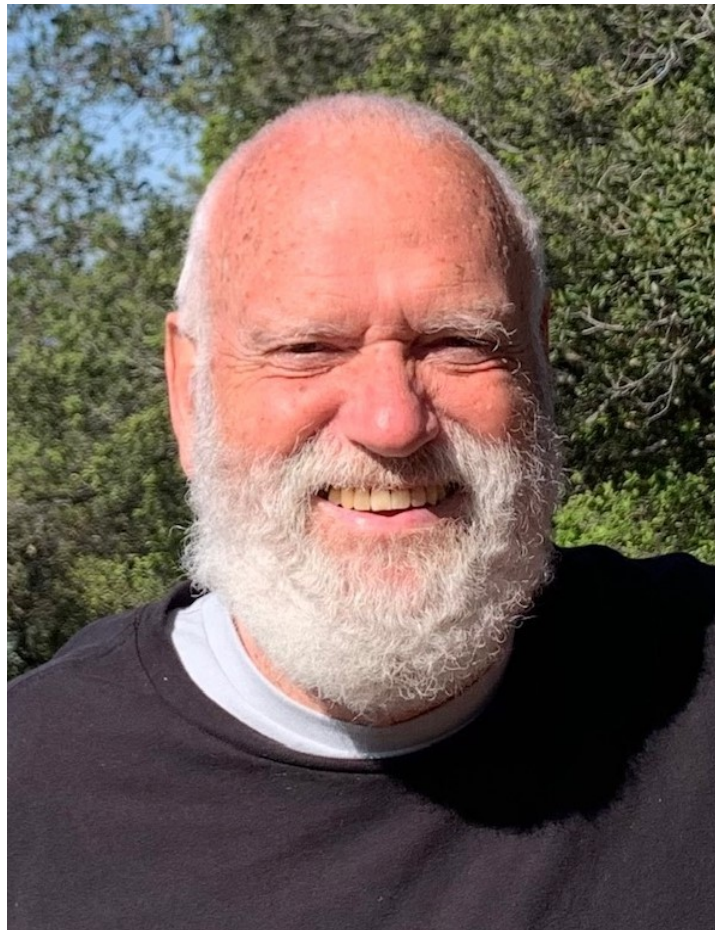
They usually only hang around for one to three days. This would be the end of its third day. Each day Mothra stayed with us she had flown to a different side of the room—a clear sign of impending death, according to some superstitions. That's where Mothra was this morning—in the kitchen at the top of the cupboard next to the ceiling. I had been talking to her for three days, letting her know she could stay as long as she wanted, but that she only had several more weeks to live, and I didn't know if she had laid her eggs yet. She had the markings of a female.

The night before, I had prepared a slurry of ripe banana thinned with water, including a pinch of sugar to hasten the rotting. She likes overripe bananas, but it has to be watery enough to slurp—or so I read on the Internet. I placed the little dish of banana slurry on the kitchen window sill with the window wide open so she could have a meal before she flew away. As a nocturnal creature, I thought she may leave in the night, the third night. But when I got up she hadn't left.

On the back porch, while performing Stick Action Meditation in the half light of early morning, I saw a large, black object flutter by my head. I recognized Mothra immediately and stood still to watch where she went. She headed South about 20 feet or so to the Canary Island Date Palms garden, paused a moment, then reversed course and flew back to me. Mothra circled my head slowly, then flew North and out of sight.

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15 APR 22:



The author on Palomar Mountain, San Diego, California