

The
Strange Dreams,
Mystical insights,
Shamanic Journeys,
Animal Messengers,
and Spirit Drawings
of Brother Erikos,
a Stoic Monk

written by Erik D. Wiegardt

Contents

Introduction	3
Strange Dreams	6
Mystical Experiences	16
Shamanic Journeys Intro	36
Lower World	47
upper World: Jesus	58
Upper World: Genghis	77
Kwafumi	91
Things that Go Bump...	95
Animal Messengers	101
Spirit Drawings	111
• Perfect wa	114
• Spirit Impulse	116
Miscellaneous	117
Belief	137

Introduction

At eighty years of age, life is more like walking through a minefield than walking through a park. You never know when your physical body will explode and cause injury or death. I'm not complaining. In fact I'm in remarkably good health for my age. But you never know, and I'm constantly reminded by the many notices I see of people my age and younger who are miserable with the physical complications of old age, sometimes with chronic pain, or those who are no longer in pain because they're dead. I'm fortunate, but my good fortune could end tomorrow. That's why I'm compiling the paranormal events of my life all in one place while I still can.

Our story begins with the Strange Dreams, and so on, as listed in the Contents. However, as much as I wanted the book to be a chronological account it is only partly so. Some of the dreams and Animal Messengers are embedded in chapters other than their own. And, although I call them 'stories' it's vitally important for you to know that all of the incidents are true and without exaggeration. You should also know that the incidents contained herein end at my 80th birthday. I expect I will have more paranormal experiences after the age of 80, but they will be told elsewhere. This book is written as much for me as it is for you, and the very thought of lying to either of us is impossible.

Some of the stories don't fit neatly into any content category, so I stuck them in the Miscellaneous chapter. Almost everything I experienced is in here, but a few things are deleted for the same reason that most of the names have been changed to protect the identity of those who are mentioned by name. Privacy.

Another matter needs to be addressed. The title of this book indicates it was written by Brother Erikos, a Stoic monk. That is my monk's name at The Stoic Monastery <https://stoicmonastery.com/> . Although most of the experiences of this book are compiled from my life before I became a Stoic monk (six years ago), they really represent the monastic identity I felt inside for most of my life.

Finally this note. Before I decide to read a book or article that touches or focuses on otherworldly events the first thing I do is investigate the author. If I were you I would want to know if this is the usual New Age wacko, or does this person have a decent education, work experience, and solid background in reality. That's why perhaps the most important part of this introduction is a combination of autobiography and Curriculum Vitae. This is written in the first person to avoid the strangeness of writing about myself in the 3rd person. You really should read this, it's called "due diligence," and I'm going to help you with that right now.

Curriculum Vitae

PERSONAL: I was born in 1945 in Walla Walla, Washington, USA, and lived most of my life on the Pacific Rim, including the US West Coast, Hawaii, and Japan. I have two adult children, three grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren as of this writing—all of whom live between 1000 and 3000 miles away, which means I rarely get to see them. My wife and I currently live in San Diego, California, and we have been together for more than 40 years.

EDUCATION: I have a Master of Fine Arts degree in Sculpture from the University of Oregon, Eugene, and my thesis was in Sound Sculpture. I have a Bachelor of Science degree with a double major in General Studies, emphasizing Literature and Psychology, from Portland State University, Oregon. I'm also a graduate of the Oregon Military Academy, Class Two-Zero, where I was commissioned as an US Army officer, then served as a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry.

WORK: I have worked in a number of occupations, including: Metabolic Laboratory Analyst at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Washington, D.C.; Production Development Laboratory Analyst for North American Aviation, Los Angeles—where I worked on the escape rocket module of the Apollo Moon Rockets; Group Insurance Representative for Standard Insurance Company of Portland, Oregon; English teacher in both Tokyo and Yamaguchi Prefectures, Japan; a Display Designer for Nordstrom, San Diego; and a free-lance Advertising Copywriter, also in San Diego. Finally, I became a Correctional Deputy, then promoted twice to Senior Deputy Probation Officer where I represented the Probation Department in the Superior Court of San Diego, California. I retired at the end of 2004.

STOICS: I first realized I was a Stoic after reading Arrian's *Discourses of Epictetus* as a 19-year-old Private in the US Army. At that time I wished there was some place where I could sign up and be counted as a Stoic, but there was nowhere to go. Thirty years later with the availability of the personal computer and Internet I was able to realize that objective with the founding of the Stoic Registry in 1996. Virtually all of my work with Stoics has been via the computer and Internet. I was the Founding Director of the Stoic Registry (1996-2021); Founder and First Scholarch of the College of Stoic Philosophers (2008-2021); Founder and First Abbot of the The Stoic Monastery (2019-present), and Headmaster of the College of Posidonius (2024-present).

Awards & Commendations

2023: Knighted for my work as “Father of the Stoic revival and Re-founder of the Stoa,” and awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of the Duke Ketel (GCDK) under the auspices of the House of Savoy

2003: Chief's Award: Letter of Commendation for revision and instruction on procedures and protocols of the Interstate Compact Unit for the San Diego County Probation Department

1998: Special Congressional Recognition for participation in Operation White Coat, a Biochemical warfare research unit of the Vietnam War Era (1963-65) where I voluntarily received the disease Tularemia to study its potential uses as a combat weapon

PUBLICATIONS. To date, I have written 10 books and numerous articles and essays, including *A Monastery of One, Path of the Sage, Battle of Mount Whitney and Other Essays, Death by Gangrene and Other Essays, Stick Action Meditation Manual, 32 Principal Doctrines of the Stoa, The Book of Doubt, The Stoic Handbook, Eternal Questions, A Journal of Metaphysics*, et cetera.

^^^

Strange Dreams

My Death

There are so many things in life that demand our attention that it's easy to ignore whole swaths of reality that are of minimal interest in order to focus more clearly on those things that are essential to survival. One such "swath" of indifferent blindness for the first 30 years of my life was the world of dreams. In fact, I still tend to ignore dreams unless they are so powerful I absolutely have to remember them the next day. And that works out just fine. It was when I was about 30 years old that I had a dream that not only intruded into my waking world the next day, it has managed to stay with me for the rest of my life. In retrospect one could say this was a kind of Near Death Experience but without all the pain and trauma. And here it is:

I saw myself as an old man alone in the bedroom of a small house, maybe a gardener's cottage, in the shadow of a much larger mansion on a hill. I had some unexplained relationship to the manor. In my dream I was floating above my body in bed when I noticed a newspaper on the floor next to the bed announcing my death. And with that announcement I realized that not only was I dead but apparently I had achieved some form of notoriety that would warrant an announcement of my death in a newspaper. When I realized I was dead I felt a great sense of relief, even joy. As to the possibility that I had achieved some measure of success I felt nothing. More important than success was a satisfaction I felt at not having become an alcoholic or committing suicide. Then I awoke.

^^^

My Brother's Postcard

Paris: July 1980. I had just finished graduate school at the University of Oregon and had set a goal of traveling around the world to visit the greatest art museums in as many countries as I could afford to explore. This, I believed, would be the completion of my education to become an artist, a sculptor. I had seen all I could stuff into my mind through my eyes in London, Amsterdam, and now Paris, but there was a problem. It was July, and I had seen so many cold and rainy days, weeks, and months that I was becoming profoundly depressed. I've always suffered from seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

I went to bed in my cheap and ugly hotel room on the West Bank feeling a deep depression and craving sunshine and blue skies. I saw my older brother in a

dream and ranted on and on about how much I hated the weather. It had been a year since I had seen a whole day of sunshine, and I couldn't take it any more. He listened impassively then showed me a postcard. The postcard showed a great desert plain, with an enormous blue sky, fierce sunshine, and at the bottom edge of the postcard picture I could see terracotta tile rooftops. No words were spoken, but when I awoke I knew he had shown me a picture of Spain.

I had not planned to go to Spain, knew nothing about it, but somehow I knew that postcard showed a scene from Spain. When I got up I immediately went to the Paris train station South and bought a ticket on the night train to Madrid. The rest of that day I wandered around the city killing time until my departure. When it came I got a French train, then transferred to a old Spanish train, one with oak paneling compartments that sat four on hard benches facing each other. There were several others in the room with me, but I was much younger then and was able to eventually go to sleep sitting upright.

When I awoke I could see the sun was up and I left the compartment to walk down the corridor to find a toilet. I looked out the train window and saw the exact same view my brother had shown me on the postcard: a great desert plain, with an enormous blue sky, fierce sunshine, including terracotta tile roofed buildings along the railroad track in the foreground. It was the exact image my brother had shown me—not approximately, exactly. I stayed in Madrid, Spain for the entire month of August, alternating my time between the Museo del Prado and the great complex of swimming pools at the Casa de Campo.

^^^

The Five Dreams: Leading to Perfect wa

1983: CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH TEACHER: NISHIKIWA, JAPAN. 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 didn't care. It was cheap. I could get 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 the small city of 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. The boss and his mistress were out of town somewhere. The Englishman Douglas 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 Douglas 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. The boss came back Sunday night and reluctantly agreed to let Amielle continue substituting for me. He were suspicious, obviously didn't believe I was disabled 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. Douglas stayed away; he didn't like Americans. 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.

The First Dream. I don't know how I got there or why. I must have been very small. After I passed through Amielle's anus and into her lower intestine I was in a passageway of cavernous proportions. I wasn't seeing with my normal vision. I wasn't looking at the final machinations of digestion but at a new world of underlying structure and meaning of great processes, and of great beauty. Although I knew where I was and what I was seeing, I was emotionally unaffected and entirely without prejudice towards matters that would commonly be viewed with squeamishness or disgust.

In fact, I was in a state of rapture, of wonder and awe, speechless with the beauty of such intelligence. I wasn't in a cavern of excrement; I wasn't in a dark and sluggish hole; I was in a soft beam of living light, of parts that silently moved and spoke to one another. And through it all, I could see and feel a design so brilliant in conception that my mind was stopped, all reality was stopped, and I awoke. As the day went by I kept remembering the dream but mostly dismissed it whenever it came to mind.

The Second Dream. The next 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 past her knees. 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. I told Amielle about it. Was there some meaning? I didn't know. I told her about the other dream. I didn't know what that meant either, but I remembered that when I awoke from the first dream it occurred to me that I should meditate, that in meditation I could recapture the vision.

The Third Dream. Just before waking the next morning, I saw myself in an art school in the US. I was working in clay in one of many rooms. I needed a rolling pin to roll out slabs of clay for a hollow-built form I'd begun. I went into an adjacent studio to search for one. I saw a cluster of people, friends of a graduate student who was standing near a body of work she assembled for a show. Curious, I pressed in to see what she had done. I could hear someone tell her what a great sculptor she was. I looked at what she had done and agreed. It was good, even excellent. Then I was suddenly sickened in the pit of my stomach. Her

work, as good as it was was nothing, meaningless, irrelevant. I overheard one of the group talking about another graduate student, a young man who was fluent in Korean and some African languages. I was impressed and frankly envious of his language skills. I awoke as I turned away to go make his acquaintance.

The Fourth Dream. The next morning, I was walking around the campus of my alma mater, the University of Oregon. I walked past a large sculpture done by a student. It was a life-sized male nude carved in stone. It was anatomically accurate, well-proportioned, and well-posed. There were wavy flame like protrusions arbitrarily extended from various muscles of the arms, back, and legs. I was first embarrassed, then depressed by the obvious strain for originality. While I walked and pondered, I met my former graduate sculpture adviser, Professor Benson, conversing with another student. I listened in as the student asked the professor exactly what he meant by the use of the word, "peers." Never one to mince word, Professor Benson pointed to me and said that he and I were peers. The student was not an artist, not a peer, only a student. Then I awoke.

The Fifth Dream. The next morning I was seated in a room. It was a shadowy room with men walking around giving orders in a clipped military style. I couldn't see their faces, but I was aware they were working for me. I felt power, incredible power, and I liked it. The men were manipulating and controlling others with an idea. My idea. I could feel the power expanding within me just as it was expanding without into the world. It was expanding and expanding until I awoke with a start of fear, a warning. "Adolph Hitler," I said.

All day I was troubled by this dream. For weeks I'd been working on an idea, a way to creatively satisfy all the improbable necessities of my fragmented life. 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 the five dreams. I'd scheduled myself to begin the next morning. Now, I wondered, was the fifth dream warning me that my idea was basically irrational? Was I suffering from some madness or megalomania or delusion of grandeur in my garden of impotence? [Continued in "Perfect wa" of the Spirit Drawings section.]

^^^

The Great Choir Dream

Much of what you will be reading about this dream are excerpts from journals begun in late 2014. Some of these excerpts are exact quotes from the day and time they were written, and some have been proofread and edited with hindsight. Either way, they are true and accurately told without obfuscation or alteration of the essential facts. You have my word.

We begin this story with a discussion of religion, a Stoic religion. To understand the dream we need to know the background of a strange and painful period in my life leading to a wrenching change and redirection so profound that I could not tell this dream without its extensive background. After years of struggle and vacillation, I finally came to the decision that Stoicism, my philosophy, could and should become a religion. This is true. Even when my rational reasons for doing so failed me, certain experiences and dreams pushed me on. Here then, are a few excerpts from my journal on the first attempt to found a Stoic religion:

. . . . The issue itself began at the Marcus Aurelius Conference Jules Evans and I organized here in San Diego in April of 2010. As a concept, Stoic religion was first given life when it was broached at an informal meeting of some of the attendees at that time. One person in particular, an Army Major, was especially insistent that we make it happen. I was skeptical, but curious.

I thought about it during the intervening years, but was unable to commit to such an important step. Occasionally, I was inspired by the idea, but most of the time I thought it was wrong, a big mistake, and I wanted no part in it. With the physics as theology course I tutored for the Marcus Aurelius School, I gradually came to think it *may* be a good idea. Most of my students were interested in it—but only at the end of the course. Some were atheists when the course began, but became strong supporters after three months of examining the idea.

I still waffle on the subject. At times I become downright depressed, gloomy, full of dread. At other times, I feel I am on the side of Fate and I need to buck up and do my duty. Often at night, I say the following mantra over and over to help me feel calm enough to go back to sleep:

All we can do is keep trying;
the rest is not up to us.

26 NOV 14: staying overnight in the Kon Tiki Inn in Pismo Beach, California, [*the same location where the College of Stoic Philosophers was born in April of 2008*] on our way to the Napa Valley for a Thanksgiving celebration with family:

As usual, I awoke a number of times in the middle of the night to get a drink of water and pee before going back to bed. The first time I woke up it was about 1 AM. I remained awake for what seemed like an hour, rolling and tossing in the bed. I thought about Stoic religion all that time, as I had been every waking hour lately, and I felt quite strongly that I wanted no part of it. I wanted a secular life. I didn't want to orient everything I was doing to the creation of a religious Stoa. I just wanted to be the Scholarch of the College. Let the others get involved. I would be president of the Society of Epictetus, but only because I was chosen for the job and had accepted it.

Almost three weeks earlier, while in deep meditation at 5:30 AM on the 7th of November, I had an answer to my quandary about whether I should be open to becoming the president if I was asked. I didn't want to. I had decided earlier that I would make it clear I would not be an officer of the nonprofit board we were creating, but I would be a board member—just to observe. However, during meditation on the 7th, the morning of the voting, this thought came to me:

“You can stop feeling fear by learning what conditions and activities frighten you, then refusing to do them. But, will you become a sage by this method? No. You will only become a sheltered, timorous person. If the sage is human they will know fear. One can only know courage by knowing fear. As Heraclitus said, if not for these unjust things men would not know justice.” Even virtues lie on their own continuum.

When I stopped meditating that morning I knew I would have to expose myself to whatever Fate chose for me. I didn't ask for it, but later that day I was unanimously chosen to be the president of the Society.

In the middle of the night in the Kon Tiki Inn of Pismo Beach, I just didn't want to be president of the religious Society of Epictetus. I would passively coast until I could appoint someone to become the Dean of the Seminary we created (I created), then I would withdraw and keep my distance until I could resign my position. I would be the Scholarch of the College of Stoic Philosophers, it's all I wanted to be, and I would be sympathetic to the needs of the seminary, but that's all. And that's how I felt as I fell back to sleep.

A couple of hours later I awoke and felt exactly the opposite. I felt like I wanted to commit EVERYTHING to the creation and life of the Society of Epictetus, the religious arm of the Stoa. It was the ONLY thing that mattered. And with that firm conviction I went back to sleep.

Later that day as we were driving up the California coast I was telling Amielle about my ridiculous mood swings regarding the SOE, and I specifically mentioned what had happened earlier as an example of my incredible vacillation on the subject. She had an entirely different view of what happened. She suggested that perhaps the second mood came about because my Spirit Guide saw my loss of interest in the Society and planted the idea that I should not abandon a Stoic religion, that it was my destiny, and I should embrace it.

I wasn't 100% convinced by her argument, but I do have a lot of respect for the subconscious mind, and I was open to the possibility that something of the sort may have been going on. With the drive up to Napa Valley and getting settled in for the night, I forgot all about the strange vacillations of the previous night in Pismo Beach.

27 NOV 14: about 5:40 AM, Napa, California: "The Great Choir Dream"
In my dream I heard a great choir singing, many voices singing loudly, and they sang these words:

Nature placed the love of God
in the heart of human kind,
all that there remains for us
Is acceptance by the mind.

Even before I opened my eyes I listened carefully to the words they were singing, so that I could write them down when I was fully awake with eyes wide open. These may not be the exact words, but they were the sense of what the choir was singing, almost shouting their song, which they repeated over and over. During the dream, upon hearing the choir sing I was deeply moved in heart and mind, and I saw myself pounding the ground with the palms of my hands as I said, "I want to believe! I want to believe!" Then I woke up. It was Thanksgiving Day.

^^

[For chronological clarity, on 18 SEP 16 on I had another strange dream that is inextricably entwined with a mystical experience in deep meditation. See "Dream Trance: Evolution," Great Insight #6.]

^^

Three years later: The following are excerpts from my journal of 2017. These notes speak of a great personal change and challenge completely unexpected. It begins with a startling discovery about my work with the Society of Epictetus, the Stoic religion, and Stoic seminary. I know of no better way to explain such a change than to quote myself as it transpired during this period.

23 JAN 17: Monday—a very important day.

This may change the rest of my life. In the conduct of the Society of Epictetus nonprofit board meeting via group email I have made an astonishing discovery. The Board does NOT think the SOE is a religious institution and does NOT want it to be a religious institution. This is the opinion of the officers of the Board in attendance, despite the fact we are a 501 (c)(3) RELIGIOUS nonprofit.

EVERYTHING I have done for the past four months has been oriented to the Society or seminary extension, the Chrysippus School of Theology. If we are not a religion, then what is the point of having a seminary to ordain Stoic philosophers? I could save enormous quantities of time, effort, and stress if I could resign as President of the nonprofit and close the seminary. Life would become so much easier and more pleasant without these headaches. OMG!

29 JAN 17: Sunday afternoon: The SOE has totally failed under my leadership, and I have resigned as President. Today, without me, the rest of the Board were

going to group email each other and decide what to do with the Society and its 100+ members and the Seminary....But the facts of my Pismo Beach awakening and the Great Choir Dream the next day are haunting me.

If I was inspired by invisible forces, or more likely by my subconscious mind, either way I feel like I have been fooled. We have a religion that no one wants. The Board voted 7 out of 10 to deny the existence of a Stoic religion, with 3 saying nothing at all. No one wants it. I've been carrying the entire burden alone, and I'm no longer going to continue. I've lost my religion. I'll practice it alone in the monastery.

And here's [another thing]. Why should I continue meditating in my Sacred Space? If the Pismo Beach awakening and the Great Choir Dream were a fraud, or I was just too dumb to understand what I was told, then why should I believe in the value of any of the experiences in the long search for enlightenment that has been my life? Why should I believe the Seven Great Insights were great insights at all? Why do I need to investigate and confirm the mystical experiences of Heraclitus...? Why should I spend the last days of my life looking for the truth of the day *after* the last day of my life?

01 FEB 17: Wednesday at 5:00 AM, I awakened from one of "those dreams."

"Loser!"

I've been called a "loser" to my face before, but only when I was awake. This time in my dream this morning I was called a loser by a young woman who came to the house from the SOE Board meeting [in my dream]. She was with another woman about the same age, 30ish, and as soon as they walked into the front room they began to make accusations. I'd never seen either of them and can't really remember what they looked like, but they were somehow fully aware of what had transpired with the Board, and that's why they had come to see me.

As soon as they walked through the front door, the one on my left called me a loser. My first inclination was to throw them out, but as I strode aggressively towards them I changed my mind and hugged the name-caller, telling her not to say that. It wasn't true, and even if it was it wasn't a nice thing to call someone. She pulled out of my hug and said even more loudly, "Loser!" The woman with her made an accusation of a different sort, which was more reasonable and less inflammatory, but I can't remember it. At that point I began a defense of my actions.

It was quite a good defense, I thought, even as I was giving it, and I was full of passion and oratory. I even noticed my voice cracking from the strain I was putting on my vocal chords, and I backed off a bit. I don't remember the defense.

I remember how it started and ended, but nothing in the middle. I started by recounting all the reasons why I believe I failed as the leader of the Society, and that it seemed to me that I was unable, incapable of being the kind of leader the Society needed, that perhaps I was the obstacle, the chief obstacle to success, and so I removed that obstacle by removing myself. And so on.

I wrapped up my defense by saying that I truly believe I had done the right thing. By leaving abruptly, as I did, I caused a shock, the kind of shock that could and maybe did bring them together—not unlike the death of a loved one or an attack on one's country. If I caused them to come together in earnest (for the first time), then they could decide together whether the Society was worth saving. If they really wanted it to continue, everything was in place for them to do so. But, if they didn't care enough to work together to preserve the Society, then it should be shut down...I had given them the opportunity to either preserve or destroy the Society according to their real wishes, and they could stop pretending to care if they didn't, and I could be their excuse.¹

^^^

A Praying Bear

20 FEB 17: I had a strange and vivid dream last night. Amielle and I were in a house somewhere, not our own house, when we saw a large bear come in through the open door. Not knowing its intent, we ran. The bear followed me, specifically, and Amielle left the dream at this point. I ran and ran, but couldn't seem to shake it. Finally, it caught me, and as I was lying at its feet, exhausted and done in, I realized I was going to be killed and eaten. All I could think of was that very soon I would be dead, and I would know what comes next [after life]. This was actually a comforting thought. Then, I noticed the bear was praying, saying "the blessing" over me. It was giving thanks for the meal (me) it was about to enjoy. I could see that its eyes were closed while mumbling its prayer, and I got up and ran away.

^^^

¹ A year later, In January of 2018, the Society of Epictetus nonprofit, the seminary, and the websites were closed down by the remaining members. The vision of creating a Stoic religion died.

Mystical Experiences

What follows can be called "insight meditation." Some people are quite visual and claim to see all sorts of things while meditating. I'm not, and I don't, ever. Traditional wisdom in various Asian practices state that if you see anything you are hallucinating. The guru will tell you to forget it and keep meditating. Meditation is not about seeing visions—as the Biblical prophets claimed to do. That's a different world and practice. If you never "see" anything at all, ever, you're doing just fine. In my meditation practice on my own I have discovered these four levels of meditation:

The Four Primary Levels of Meditation

1. **Will Power**, so-called, because it is the most effortful stage and requires considerable strength of will even to get into position and begin meditating. It takes even more will power to stay there and deal with the aches, pains, itches and the wandering, disobedient mind. All this effort contributes to the practice of the Stoic, because, as you know, the location of all good and evil is in the human will. By strengthening it we can choose our internal dialogue and direct our decisions with much greater ability.

Characteristics: mind wanders far and wide, and you may not even realize that you have been thinking about something(s) until long after you stopped listening to your breath and resumed the internal dialogue with yourself. Meditating in the first level is like enduring a tug of war between the resolve of your will and your mind's desire to stop this nonsense and get up.

2. **Deep Meditation.** The aches, pains, and itches may still be present, but they are much less troublesome. The mind still wanders off and tries to dominate the situation, but now the will power has won, and the mind doesn't get very far before it is pulled back by the will to the breathing silence.

Characteristics: there is a feeling and realization that you are in deep meditation and have now joined all those who have meditated before you for many centuries. They experienced this feeling too, and you are part of that lineage. You are glad to have come this far, but you are still ready to call it a day, a good meditation day, and get on with your real life which awaits you, beckoning with increasing urgency.

3. Ananda. At some point in your experience as a meditator, sooner or later, you will experience what the Hindus call *ananda*, or bliss. This level is called that because it *is* that. Ananda comes to you; you do not go to it. You cannot wish it or will it to come over to you no matter how long you sit. It comes when it is ready, and that's all I know. When it comes you will know it. It is unmistakable. There will be no question. It's as obvious as sitting in air one minute and sitting underwater the next.

Characteristics: For the first time in your experience as a meditator you will *not* want your meditation session to end. You will still feel the aches, pains, and itches, but they won't matter. Your mind will *not* wander unless you give it permission and direct where it goes. Your breathing slows w a y down and becomes very shallow. Sooner or later ananda fades, but it leaves a strong impression, and with mindfulness you can keep the remainder with you—sometimes for hours.

4. The Ineffable. An experienced meditator can experience ananda nearly every time he or she meditates. The fourth level, the ineffable, is less common, even rare, and there are those who meditate for a lifetime and never go there. It's called *ineffable* for a reason. It's difficult, even impossible to describe to one who has not experienced it.

Seven Mystical Insights

- 1st Insight: Empty Sky
- 2nd Insight: Pure Love
- 3rd Insight: The Sage
- 4th Insight: Trance
- 5th Insight: Gravitas Ananda
- 6th Insight: Dream/Trance
- 7th Insight: Sudden Thought

In November 2002, I set about designing my own attempt to know the mystical experience personally and directly. I was neither philosophizing nor experimenting. I was meditating to discover for myself the mystical in life. I began meditating with a purpose and took notes when I thought it was appropriate. The following notes were taken from the conceptual beginning to the concluding realization of the seventh insight I call "Sudden Thought."

The entries contained herein are taken from a journal of handwritten notes recorded on the day the thought or event occurred. Most of the 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 are followed by personal commentary about the Great Insight which may have been written very soon or days or years after the experience.

Great Insight #1: Empty Sky

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 my effort to achieve mystical insight.

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 of arrhythmia stress I suddenly and unexpectedly encountered in January after at least four months living symptom free. And, I know that when I am in a state of advanced distress I typically believe my life will end soon; 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....

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 others, is seen, or felt and known, to be illusory....The debate, of course, centers on whether this is a state of awareness of an objective external reality, or a subjective state more 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 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....

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?...

09 JUN 03: 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 you're doing 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 know the good days and the bad. Meditate and the sacred space will come.

13 JUN 03@ 5:45 AM: Using "Mind Being" mantra

(Thinking the mantra words with each exhalation of the breath):

Mind being
Mind being,
Mind being,
Mind being.
Being mind,
Being mind,
Being mind,
Being mind.

I attempted to break up the boredom of meditation and mind-wandering with the 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, awakening @ 4:30 AM, a work day:

- 4:50: performed Stick Action Meditation in the front room
- 5:10: Began Lotus Meditation in the monastery
- 5:30: Looked at the clock and decided to continue meditation a little longer
- approx. 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. In fact, while I was there it was as if I was physically incapable of returning. I remember wondering, "Is this enlightenment?"

Commentary:

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 these 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....

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

7:20 PM Notes: the chronology of events should also include what I had for dinner the night before and that I slept with my wife, Amielle:

- Pork sausage, Italian, hot,
- Jasmine rice and green beans;
- and, with dinner Amielle and I watched a police crime drama ("Training Day") on DVD—with buttered popcorn.

Why do I mention such detail? Because:

- I'm not a celibate
- I'm not a vegetarian
- I'm not a hermit or monastic
- I'm not averse to enjoying worldly entertainment

However, I do agree with Heraclitus that a dry soul is best.

Later Commentary:

- The Empty Sky is the nothing we don't know. It is ineffable because it is extrasensory. 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 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 I wasn't really there my head was above the sea the whole time I was there, but at the time I didn't think about how much of me was in one location or the other.

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. Why the Great Sea represented the universe or cosmos as we know it I have no idea, except that I knew it was. Water in this instance was 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 Heraclitus again, and it wasn't until GI #3 in contrast with GS #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, 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, the Perfect wa sumi e may represent the Empty Sky, the nothing that we don't know, and is also strangely reminiscent of Kant's two-worlds hypothesis.

Great Insight #2: Joy Love

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, 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 meditation....

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!"

20 JUL 03: Yesterday, I was compelled by the discomfort in my right hip to go to urgent care at Kaiser Hospital. Diagnosis: "acute bursitis."

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?

18 SEP 03: Joy Love. It began a half 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 of love, pure love.

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.
- The Stoics didn't 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 my consciousness in deep meditation. But, Pure Love as a natural power was conceived long after the experience.
- Great Insight #1, Empty Sky, was a mental construct with some feeling, while Great Insight #2, Pure Love, was all feeling. There was no environment of any kind for that feeling, which would have been 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.
- On the day of this experience I remember sitting on the trolley on the way to work and seeing all the ways people distracted themselves from having to think about and feel their life, from discussions about football teams to

- other kinds of small talk. Smart phones and texting hadn't been invented yet, so people still interacted with one another.
- 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.

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 at all is highly unusual, in my experience, 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.

Later, when I was riding the local trolley to my work in San Diego I looked around at my fellow passengers and tried to recreate that feeling I had in meditation. I was puzzled by the meditation experience and thought maybe it had increased my affection for humanity somehow, but I felt nothing more towards them than I usually did. They were all strangers, and I felt nothing but indifference. Their existence today was no more significant than it was the day before. However, I did notice one thing I usually ignore. A couple of men were talking about the baseball season with the considerable knowledge of dedicated spectator sport fans. I didn't feel love. It felt odd to see how hard people work to avoid facing the real issues of life, how eagerly we embrace the distractions of sports and entertainment in order to avoid confronting the things that matter. I didn't *care* that we do this; it just seemed odd.

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. Inasmuch as we Stoics believe that Nature is God and God is Nature, one can know with confidence that love is an attribute of God.

There's no suggestion that love is the *only* attribute of God or even its greatest defining characteristic. It may be, but I was not privy to this knowledge as a certain truth. Until further insight I can only accept this experience as one physical demonstration of God as a phenomenon of providence. Religious Stoics

believe that Nature is providential. I accepted that as an idea, but now I also accept it as a physical fact. Empires come and go, but the love of God is forever. It's a law of Nature.

Great Insight #3: Stoic Sage

I is te ye lat *There have been no further Great 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 dislike 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. SAM has been perfected as my primary form of action meditation. I'm still seeking enlightenment, but don't really think about it much. My meditation posture has settled on the Burmese position which I actually learned from a 10-day Vipassana retreat. [NOTE: All days and entries are not preserved here; only the ones that seemed most relevant.]*

22 NOV 13: during PnWPM

Consciousness Expanded!

5:55 am, It began with a thought: *Stoic philosophy is little more than a drop in the bucket*, which 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 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, four hours after my insight: 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, 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 Secret Stairs climb [exercise], stopping at Sprouts [grocery store] on the way home, then going to the Trader Joe's grocery store.

This may be the beginning of the enlightenment keystone. It will need to grow wider and deeper in order for it to last, and 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 my 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.

Commentary:

I should note that on several occasions I thought of this experience as an expansion of consciousness by one degree.

15 September 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 does not function without virtue, necessarily; it 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 immoral 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 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 Lord not the sadistic meanness of a Marquis de Sade. A true warrior shows respect. There are times when everyone must be the Dark Lord. 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 he 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 a doctor perform surgery if he was 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 your 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?

Later. I can't tell you how strange it was 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, "Being a Stoic Sage." In truth, I don't know with certainty what it feels like to be the near-mythical Stoic sage, but it seemed so to me at that time. After starting in meditation and continuing for more than five hours I had plenty of time to examine how I was feeling, but what could I compare it to? Only my usual self is available for comparison and contrast. 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: Trance

[**T m lat** NOTE: All days and entries are not preserved here; only the ones that later seemed most relevant.]

23 JAN 14: Thursday **SLUDGE**

0515-0650 PnWPM: 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 4 sips of cold tea left in my cup from the beginning of meditation. 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 heaviness 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, and in about 10 minutes it dissipated, mostly, and I came out of meditation. I sat with my eyes open, staring straight ahead, for a full 5 minutes, maybe more, before I got up and went on my way.

Commentary:

25 JAN 14: Saturday 0530-0630

PnWPM: 0625: Is Ananda anything more than the physical release of tension one feels when the muscles of the head, face, and neck relax, and the general stress and strain of being alive dissolves into the joy of being alive. That may be why I can realize it for a short time very soon after I begin meditation.

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 30 years ago. 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. Also stiff and essentially paralyzed. I knew I could stop this condition whenever I wanted to, I somehow knew that was allowed, but I could have stayed in a 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 stiff 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 GI #2 is Pure Love, then GI #4 may be Pure Trance.

What does that mean? It doesn't really become apparent until GI #5, Dark Side, when the feeling of sludge or sludge-ness is personified as a person. More on that later.

Great Insight #5: Gravititas Ananda

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.

28 JAN 14: Tuesday **SLUDGE II or Gravititas 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 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 (*commonly referred to as Genghis 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 far away and meant nothing to me. Irrelevant. I've given this new experience the name *Gravititas 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.

Commentary:

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 himself way too seriously and is more impressed with himself than I am. Of course that opinion may be formed from having so little experience with really impressive people, those who were important enough to wear high seriousness well.

We'll see where this Gravititas Ananda state goes. I welcome its return. It's not a bad feeling. It no longer has the dark sludge quality. I know I could learn from it. Today, as I walked to and climbed the Secret Stairs I kept thinking about what clothes I should wear and the kind of car I should drive as one who represents the Dark Side. It would be a significant change from what I now wear and drive.

More good news: my lower backache is mostly gone. My overall health is returning to normal. Now for the climb back into a state of physical fitness.

What we have so far:

- *GI #1: Empty Sky/Great Sea.* An overview of existence in a material world surrounded by a vast and empty sky.
- Perhaps *GI #2, Pure Love*, is related to Being a Stoic Sage, *GI #3*, the same or similar as *GI #4, Pure Trance*, is to *GI #5, Gravititas Ananda*—which is really a Dark Prince. I can't help but come back to that idea of a "Dark Prince."
- It would be reasonable to suggest the possibility that the Stoic Sage and the Dark Prince are on a continuum of opposites. If that's the case, then the sage is formed by the force of love as the Dark Prince is formed by the force of the absence of love? And what does this have to do with trance. To be continued.

29 JAN 14: Wednesday: 0455-0600 PnWPM **The Real Gravititas Ananda.**

1345: I came upon an idea I've seen many times before, of course, but I never knew what to do with it. Until today, I basically just left it alone. Now, I understand it—or I'm beginning to. The cosmology of cosmic 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 meditation experiences I have had, beginning with *Sludge*, then *Sludge II or Gravititas 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 the Dark Prince doesn't have any interest in them.* I know because I felt it. Strongly. 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. Gravititas 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 satanic being. 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. And, I would be remiss if I didn't 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.

Great Insight #6: Dream/Trance: Evolution

2 ½ ye lat : 18 September 16: 5:00 AM: 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 about 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. This deadline was fast approaching, and I had nothing. Just as the deadline appeared 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. I sketched a clay bust on a sculpture pedestal of some human head that was mostly finished, but work still needed to be done. I had deliberately left it unfinished in my drawing. On the floor all around the pedestal were toy animals in plastic, cloth, all kinds of material but none in clay. They were all finished, whole, even polished. There were hundreds of them, and the animals they represented in real life had all been here for a long time, even millions of years before humans, such as the dragonfly that was perfected back in the age of the dinosaurs. All of them had reached the peak of their evolution long ago, while the newest among them, 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, come to 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 deep truth, and I felt different physically, weighted down by the questions that came to me as I was awaking—the *who are we* questions. My head and shoulders felt heavy. I was stooped.

I went through my usual Sunday morning ceremony, including making tea, gonging, et cetera, right up to the chanting of "Naturam Venerans." When I began chanting, I realized that not only did my body feel different my voice was really weird. It broke so much I couldn't hold a steady tone. Gravelly. It's difficult to describe, but I've never had that kind of voice in my life. It didn't sound too bad after I stopped fighting it, kind of like singing gravel, and I was able to finish the chant.

I probably started meditating around 5:30 AM, maybe a little later, but the dream was still fresh in my consciousness. I quickly went into deep meditation, then more gradually went into a trance. I only call it that based upon the trances of Socrates I've read about. But, unlike Socrates, I didn't hear voices or have conversations with my daimon 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*—far beyond my usual 1/2 hour passive meditation period. 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 trance was lifted, and I felt completely normal—but puzzled. What was that all about?

Commentary:

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 me. 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—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 Joy 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 in my sacred space, I had a really strong reaction to Black Eagle, my oversoul, and I immediately went back into trance but came out of it in a few seconds. Then thought occurred to me, "The daimon is the key."

Why?

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, some of them accepted 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? Are daimones 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.

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 GI #4, Trance, 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 a 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 is it 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 deep meditation:

Without any thought on this subject beforehand (as Heraclitus said, expect the unexpected), 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 seven 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.

The Active principle remains while the Passive principle is changing, even as it burns away at the end of its life cycle, which 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. After 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 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 GI #6 I found I was no longer able to sit in any position on the floor and after 30 years I had to resume meditating in a chair. This was a difficult 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.

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 Gravititas Ananda, Great Insight #5, I rarely have joy 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 72-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* (ibid., 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 seem 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 30+ 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 winning 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.

Shamanic Journeys

Introduction

If you're not familiar with shamanism it would be disagreeably difficult to jump right into the shamanic journeys that I will be writing about. A rather lengthy introduction is necessary for you to understand what's going on. And, to ignore the story and origins of humankind's oldest universal spiritual activity would be a disservice to this ancient wisdom. But for those who are already familiar with the essential background to the shamanic journey you may want to skim much of what is provided here.

Now I'm going to introduce Lakota Sioux cosmology and the name I gave myself as a young man in honor of my appreciation for it. Lakota cosmology uses four common animals to symbolically represent the four types of human personalities found in their tribe. The most common person is the mouse, its color is green, and it is noted for its myopic vision where all at a distance is blurry. They are the people who do the 101 detail jobs necessary for living well. The bear personality is the warrior, the defender of the tribe, and its color is black. The hunter is the bison, the provider for the tribe, and its color is gold. Finally, the eagle has far-seeing vision and it is the personality of the chief and shaman. Its color is white.

I combined the Bear and the Eagle. I didn't know if it was permissible to combine the two, but I did it anyway and for many years I thought of my native American alter ego as Black Eagle. It was the personality with which I was born, and it was actually a useful way to see myself and my reactions to the world around me. I knew this about myself, my alternate identity, and never doubted it, but I never told anyone.

Then, nearly 40 years after my interest in Lakota cosmology my wife Amielle sent me an Internet file of 20 or so old photographs of Native Americans taken by Edward S. Curtis. Without much interest I 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.

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 beaten down and 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 they had lived with and depended upon for a thousand of years of survival.

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 had whipped through it in a couple of hours on the plane; 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 had both M.D. and Ph.D. Degrees from good universities and was 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.

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 that 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)
- " " *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 changed 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

shamanic drumming CD or do the drumming yourself. 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 \$50 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 Middle World 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.)."

Middle World 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 him or herself. Neither Walsh nor Harner spend much time describing the NOR and what goes on there. The best source I know is Carlos Castaneda'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 Castaneda 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 Middle World 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 the heavy, MW trance in mysticism, 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 Lower World (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, 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.

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 MacDonald'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 and crawling through 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. All it takes is making the time to learn—and practice. Maybe.

Lower World: "We will be Your Teachers"

CONTENTS:

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: LW Matters
10 MAY: The Monastery
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: LW doesn't "exist"

13 FEB: Three questions
12 APR: The Future
23 APR: Decline Effectively

The following entries are from a journal of shamanic journeying I keep. The journey entries in this section will only include journeys to Lower World (LW) with an occasional reference to Upper World (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.

25-26 MAR 17: Los Angeles Shamanic Healing Workshop: Saturday and Sunday (See 4.1.2, "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 Middle World.

03 APR 17: Monday: Lower World:

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, the Assiniboine Black Eagle.

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

10 APR 17: Monday: 0600-0630: Lower World (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 Lower World 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 Upper World and Lower World," 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 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 Lower World?”

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 going to be overlap and interaction.

10 MAY 17: Wednesday: 0549-0606: LW:

[I went to bed last night intending to practice my visualizing technique in LW, but this morning, as I have so many times before I got up thinking I needed to establish Stick Action Meditation (SAM) as a business. I decided to go to LW and get advice about bringing SAM into the world, creating a business and international organization. I've obsessed about this idea since first creating this program more than 27 years ago.]

I began the LW journey in the usual way, but I didn't come out where I usually do. Instead of American SW desert I came out into green fields with a snow-capped mountain in the distance. I looked for Ram, but he wasn't there. No one greeted me, so I flew as an eagle, which seems to be my preferred method of getting around in LW. I tried to recognize where I was and what I should do next. I kept seeing this snow-capped mountain and decided that must have some meaning, so I flew closer. In doing so, I saw green fields and white farm houses, then more mountains. I saw a small town off to my left, not far away, but it made me uncomfortable so I flew in another direction. I got the impression it was the 20th or 21 century.

I didn't know if any of my PA family would be there for me, so I simply asked to see a Compassionate Helper. I immediately found myself on the side of a snowy mountain with a man in a robe, a heavy woolen robe, who appeared to be a monk. I thought maybe I was in the Himalayas but didn't know for sure. The monk was my age or older. I asked him if he was a Compassionate Helper. He said he was. After waiting a minute I began explaining the difficulty I had experienced many years, wanting to establish SAM as a business, but that something always held me back. I wanted to know why and what I should do.

The monk said nothing, but I found myself standing beside him on the second floor of a old weathered wooden building. It was a monastery. We looked down on a courtyard below where several men, young men, were stripped to the waist in the freezing temperature working out with sticks, my Sticks. They appeared to be doing SAM, or some advanced variation thereof. I watched a few moments then realized this was the answer. I turned to the monk, and he said, "Businesses come and go, but this is eternal." He spoke wordlessly; just his thoughts when he chose to, entered my mind.

Two years later I established an online Stoic monastery.

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, Lower World?"

"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. It seemed contrived. 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 Lower World. 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 Lower World, but spend 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 Middle World “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 Middle World*. 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 Middle World?
- 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, and Owl 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 Lower World 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.

With this information, a 4th question occurred to me, and even though I was reluctant to ask I went ahead anyway:

“Using this understanding of love and consciousness, should I become a shamanic healer?”

“Yes.”

UpperWorld: Jesus of Nazareth

CONTENTS:

- 04 APR 17: Difficulties with UpperWorld journeys
- 05-6 APR: Apology
- 07-8 APR: Initiation
- 25 APR: JoN asks a questioning
- 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

The Journeys

04 APR 17: Tuesday: 8:30 PM: Upper World: Shamanic drumming done using the MP-3 file:

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. Only darkness. No teachers of any kind. I'm beginning to wonder if the Upper World is closed to me for some reason. The Lower World is so much more accessible I wonder if I should just forget about the Upper World 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.

Commentary:

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 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: MP-3 drumming: UpperWorld:

I went to 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. I very nearly dismissed it from my consciousness 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 is 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: 2 PM: Commentary:

There must be literally about a billion people in the world right now who would be absolutely thrilled to meet Jesus in the 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. It just seems an odd fit.

07 APR 17: Friday: 0345-0422 [*the times indicated in this way represent the actual drumming and journey period*]: UpperWorld (UW): This time I understood why he was my teacher. More later. [*This narrative resumes on the 8th.*]

08 APR 17: Saturday afternoon:

I'm returning to the journey of yesterday, the 7th, at 0345 hours. 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 began seeing a city of finished stone and/or terracotta walls. It may have been some location in a very early Greece or

Rome period. 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 glass, 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." I asked, "Are you my teacher?" He said, "Yes, I am."

I asked if there was something I needed to learn now? He said there was. I had forgotten to come to the UW with a question in mind, but suddenly realized what I wanted and needed, and it was the very thing for which Jesus was the master. I asked him, "Would you give me a shaman's heart?" He said, "Yes," 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.

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 didn'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 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 Stoa helps 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 asked this question: Is there any method or mantra I can use to have the rather common mystical experience of the oneness of all things? "No," he said. "It's a gift." "Can I ask for this gift," I asked?" "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." I answered: "A person may hear stories from travelers about how beautiful the city of Paris is, 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 asked these questions, followed by his answers in quotes:

- Who are you? That is, are you the Jesus of Nazareth who lived on Earth (MW) about 2000 years ago, "I am," he said.
- What are you? "I am the spirit of that Jesus.
- Where are you? "I am in the spirit world, the UpperWorld, or heaven, 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.

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.*]

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 was affirmative—even though no words were spoken.

I don't feel like there was any contact with the *real* Jesus in this journey. I fell 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 the 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. I journeyed to the UW and talked to Jesus about my concerns. He told me exactly what needed to be done, then said, “This is your life lesson.” He said it several times.

I am not including what Jesus said was my life lesson, but I will mention one thing he said that comes back to me time and again: “It takes courage to be compassionate in a world ruled by selfishness and greed.” I was surprised by the

life lesson itself. If he had asked me what I thought it was before telling me I would have had another idea entirely. Perhaps at 72 years of age Jesus decided I was never going to learn it on my own, so he would have to just tell me outright what it was.]

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 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.

I asked Jesus if I had made a mistake. We stood side-by-side as I spoke. He said, "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. I asked him directly why Stoics needed a religion. "It focuses the mind," he said.

I went on. I said that if I was going to do this I would need help with the cosmology and principles. He said that I already had everything I needed, but that he would help. Once again, I asked about why Stoics needed a religion when there were already so many ways to "focus the mind." He said that Stoicism was unique and would appeal to certain kinds of 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, asking why a secular school and monastery wouldn't work as well, even better, because it would appeal to so many more people, even atheists. He said that education was useful, but that it didn'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, then said that if this was real, and not just my imagination born of a sense of guilt for having resigned from the religious organization, then I would do it. But, I would need more proof. I would be back.

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 MW martyr, and I need some kind of powerful evidence that this is more than 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. I asked if it was really necessary for Stoicism to be organized as a religion for me to continue my work. He said, "No." I described my LW journey where I met the monk at the monastery 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? With regard to the creation of the subconscious mind he said, "Yes and no." I asked him to elaborate, and he explained that much of what is seen and heard from the Spirit World is the creation of the subconscious. For example, he is not speaking to me in English, but the subconscious picks up the information and gives it an intelligible translation.

I asked if that's so, then you must have an existence separate from my mind? "Yes," he said. So, then you enter my consciousness via the subconscious mind as image creator and language decoder? "Yes," he said. How does it do that? I asked. "Evolution," he said. "The subconscious mind is amazing."

I asked if the 4th level was a place where he lived? He said no, that it was created by my subconscious as a place for me to stand, because it knows I would be more comfortable with something under my feet. I asked to see what our meeting might look like without the dust, rock, and rubble platform I was 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.

I asked if he could explain how he was able to communicate with my subconscious mind from a location external to it. He said, "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 by 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 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: 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 but listened. I asked, “What is God?”

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*]. I said, “So the Stoics were right.” Jesus said, “Yes.” He went on to explain that 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. He said that he was. I

said, "But, I'm not worthy." He said, "Yes, you are." I said, "Well, I can't imagine why." He said, "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 I thanked him properly and vowed to apologize next time.

31 MAY 17: Wednesday: 0630-0655: UW: 4th Level: 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.

I explained that to have Jesus as my UW teacher would be concrete proof in MiddleWorld that I was not just eccentric or weird but certifiably insane. I said I was willing to accept that condemnation if he had an important message for the world. If so, then I would be willing to be a bearer of that message. But, I had no illusions about what that would mean for my life, that it could destroy my identity, everything I am and all the work I had done with the Stoics. I said I was willing to pay that price, because anything he had 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. That is, "What is dark matter?" I went on to say that if this was an inappropriate question, then he could choose another question that would also reveal some aspect of nature about which I 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.

[NOTE: When I refer to Dark Matter I'm also referring to Dark Energy, but to spell it out every time is tedious for both reader and writer, so I will hereinafter refer to it abbreviated as DEM.]

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 DEM. 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 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!" DEM 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 DEM was the Spirit World it seemed so obvious that it was beyond doubt.

These thoughts brought me to a follow up question. I asked, "Then is DEM the Empty Sky of my first Great Insight?" "Yes," he said. I got the impression he was not just in the DEM 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 DEM? What you showed me was God of the visible world, the MiddleWorld." Jesus said that 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.*

**NOTE: 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 DEM, then this is where we go when we die?" Jesus confirmed my conjecture. So, astrophysicists studying the DEM 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. I asked Jesus if journeying was the only way to gain access to the Spirit World. He said, "No, but it's a good one."

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: 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 I have just written. 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. He said, "Yes," and added that I would know the reason in time.

I said to Jesus that he would undoubtedly end up being the most important person in this book, and that the information about the Spirit World and DEM should probably be the final conclusion, the end of this book. I also told him I would be starting another book after this one to continue my journeys in the Spirit World. I asked him a final time if I could see him in greater detail as he was when here on Earth. I was able to see a few, small detailed features of his face, but nothing really helpful for seeing his image overall. I thanked him and left.

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 DEM as Spirit World issue makes my situation exponentially intensified. DEM 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?

Bald men in Mozambique could be the targets of ritual attacks, because "The belief is that the head of a bald man contains gold," said Afonso Dias, a police commander in Mozambique's central Zambezi province. BBC News, 07 JUN 17

Is this what I've come to after more than 30 years of work? Is this the career I chose in lieu of the one I didn't have in the real world? Am I a purveyor of superstition and lunacy? Is there any difference between what I'm doing in the spirit worlds and killing bald men to look for gold in their heads? Well, it is less violent, I suppose, but let's be honest—how do Mozambique beliefs and my claims differ? How does either fantasy look 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 and Dark Energy. 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 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 quite big. 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 things I didn't expect to see.

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.

*

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, 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, 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 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 and social 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 plant 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 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. But, for now, I felt our meetings were over.

^^^

UpperWorld: Genghis Khan

CONTENTS:

5. 01-3 JUL 17: Genghis Khan and the Spirit World
6. 12 JUL: Love
7. 13 JUL: Cosmology outline
8. 12 OCT: Fear is a bad habit
9. 18-19 OCT: More cosmology
10. 24 OCT: Death
11. 26 OCT: The Cowboy
12. 27 OCT: Consciousness
13. 31 OCT: Survival of Consciousness
14. 07 NOV: Dark Matter, Loneliness, Evolution
15. 14 NOV: Consciousness and Soul
16. 17 NOV: Consciousness and the Daimon
17. 23-25 JAN 18: The Rich
18. 12 MAR: Consciousness and Love

Genghis Khan (1162-1227)

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 Genghis 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 Genghis 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 the wall of my sacred space, and I greet him, along with Athena, Black Eagle, and Perfect wa, at the beginning of every day.

It's impossible to know with any great accuracy what Genghis 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, Genghis 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 Genghis's day and for centuries afterward, even to the naming of retarded children, "Mongoloids" in the 19th century.

There are two primary reasons for the lies and distortions about Genghis: 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 Genghis 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 history.

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 Genghis 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 scourge of the Middle East in his day, 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 anywhere in the world. That doesn't include the fact that he also was the greatest conqueror who ever lived. The reach of Genghis 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 Genghis, 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 Genghis Khan he was sitting in an oriental garden, looking just like the image of the Genghis as a sage I have on my sacred space 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 Genghis 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:

Genghis 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 Pnuma 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.

"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 Genghis. 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? Doesn't it really 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 war.

I obviously needed more information from Genghis.

13 JUL 17: Thursday: 0555-0619: UW—5:

Once again, Genghis 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.

“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.

“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 Genghis 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 Genghis, 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. Genghis 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 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. Beauty.

"What is beauty. What does it come from and why does it exist?"

"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 Genghis 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?"

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.

Genghis 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?"

"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 Genghis, but when I stepped out of the elevator 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 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 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 Genghis 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 Genghis Khan. Whereupon Jesus and the angels in heaven disappeared, and I was in the oriental garden with Genghis.

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 Genghis 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. Genghis 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 Genghis 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 Genghis. 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 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:

Genghis 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?"

Genghis 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. Genghis 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., Genghis 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 Genghis 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 Genghis 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,” Genghis 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 Genghis, my Teacher, was learning, and I had trouble retaining it. Anyway, this is the best I could reconstruct what I learned from Genghis in the brain I've got. I reviewed in outline what I learned:

- Dark Matter
- Loneliness
- the Continuum
- 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 Genghis. 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 Asian garden and speak to an Asian sage. My journeying intuition is that civilization moves from the Middle East, the earliest

fortified towns, to the Mediterranean, then the modern city, which is destroyed, resulting in level—4, the wasteland, and finally we enter an Oriental period when China rules the world. This seems right, but I don't really know.

I met Genghis 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:

Genghis 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 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," Genghis 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 until it becomes 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 Genghis?

"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.

12 MAR 18: Monday: 0600-0620: UW—5:

[It had been quite awhile since I had visited Genghis. I was seeing him less and less frequently, but I really wanted to know more about the nature of consciousness and love as it related to healing. On the way to UpperWorld I decided last minute to bring Black Eagle, Bear, and Owl with me. No reason. I just wanted them with me.]

"So, you've brought the whole family," Genghis said when we met him in the garden.

"Yes." But then I got directly to the point.

"I've been told there are two ways a Spirit World healer can effect healing in the MiddleWorld, consciousness and love. What is their connection to each other?"

"Love is an emanation of consciousness." He used the analogy of the sun.

"Heat and light are just two emanations of the sun's energy or power. Consciousness is God, and these are attributes of God that are not bound by UW or MW or LW." Then he reminded me that beauty is not found exclusively in sight but that it takes numerous forms. Beauty, Truth, and Love are all emanations of the consciousness of God."

This seemed totally clear, and I thanked him. Then, I turned to a couple of other matters of a more personal nature that had been bothering me lately

^^^

The Power Animal's Answer

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.

REALIZATION: Drummed and breathed for awhile before entering LW in order to deepen my trance. I came out at 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 thought I would 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 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, but I knew it was true—once it was pointed out to me. I looked over at Owl, and she agreed with Bear. I noticed B.E. 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 another form of passive meditation, I may be gone longer than usual, and I wanted some assurance they wouldn't leave me.

"As long as you love us and care about us, we won't leave you, we can't leave you," Bear said. I telepathically understood that it was a law of their world, SW. They won't stop loving me as long as I love them. The words of JoN came to my mind, "Wherever your treasure is there will your heart be also." Only after remembering the quote did I also remember how appropriate it was to be quoting my shamanic master of UW. The one thing philosophers so often forget in their intense effort of dissection and analysis is the heart. 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, and Black Eagle and I shook hands.

^^^

Kwafumi, My Daimon

With doubt as a constant companion of journeying I decided stop everything and take a single step of faith, and accept the possibility of daimones as real and external entities that guide us, not unlike spirit guides—not unlike the daimon of Socrates. Admittedly, this is a big step, one that would be rejected out of hand by some, but if we accept that daimones 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 or spirit guide? So, the most necessary and essential next step in more than a year of journeying at least 4 times a week must be one of faith. It seems acceptable and reasonable even for a Stoic philosopher to suspend judgment and interact with a spirit being as if it were real. Regardless of its relationship to me, regardless of whether it is within or without me interaction with a daimon could be very instructive. It was worth a try.

Kwafumi

10 MAY 18: Thursday: 0615-0630: STM—Daimon:

INTENT: Step Two: 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 bald. She was very attractive, maybe in her twenties, tall and slender, maybe Maasai tribe.

I asked her if she was my daimon. She said she was—as she appeared in one of her 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. I asked her name, and 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—and I didn't know if I would see anything at all. I don't think Socrates ever spoke of *seeing* his daimon, only of *hearing* his instruction or cautions. (I'll have to check this.)

My daimon, Kwafumi, appeared in the context of an African village with round mud building 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. Anyway, as I drummed my way back 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. I asked her how I could know if she was real. She said that proofs and evidence are material world conditions. The Spirit World (SW) is another dimension of reality. The human mind is part of Middle World and

only operates in this dimension. But, the more time I spend in SW the better I will understand it—or intuit how it works.

I asked about the reality of the journey, what I was seeing right that moment—the river flowing by on my left, mountains in the distance, Kwafumi sitting on a rock in front and slightly above me. Kwafumi said that she inspired the idea, and my memory and imagination created the “reality” of the journey. How could it be otherwise? We can only perceive what we know from our MW (aka 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 minding 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.

Next, I asked if she was in fact 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 the 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.

I asked if there was a difference between a Daimon and an Oversoul. She said 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 I no longer need or want to incarnate into MW, I still have a thread connecting me to the old, and that thread is I observing, guiding, and guarding the souls that remain. Kwafumi no longer incarnates but is still connected to the world through me.

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.

15 MAY 18: Tuesday: 0607-0628: SW: Kwafumi:

INTENT: To contact Kwafumi and ask her about our relationship, for example, did she have to come whenever I called?

REALIZATION: She answered, apparently, by not coming when I called—which I did a number of times. I also looked for her in the village, by the river, and under the umbrella tree. Eventually, I gave up and just listened to the drum and felt my breath rise and fall...The impression I get from this morning's experience is that I should do STM as the "default" position, and only seek my Daimon's help when it is really needed. No idle chatter. Otherwise, I am subject to the Decline Effect—something I am increasingly convinced is real in this work.

Later. I have journeyed to see my daimon numerous times since, but I never see the village or any other "scenery." I have come to realize that journeying with imagery is no longer necessary, that visualization of Kwafumi is not required to communicate. I don't hear voices; I realize thoughts.

* * *

Things that Go Bump in the Night: A New Theory regarding Spectral Apparitions also known as Ghosts

This is a true story about psychopomp work, guiding the souls of the dead to the Spirit World. The story is told as it unfolded over a period of four weeks in May, 2020. Following the conclusion, there is a brief summation of what was learned in the process of investigating and living this story. A new theory regarding the nature of what are commonly called ghosts has been proposed. It is based upon the experience of attempting to remove a troublesome ghost from a neighbor's house, plus shamanic journeying information received from a female daimon who lives in the Upper World of the Axis Mundi. The names have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

Part One

This past week, Charlotte, a neighbor and retired school teacher who lives about four doors away from me, spoke of her great fear of a ghost who lives in her house. Having recently taken a shaman workshop that explored the subject, and having learned a little about psychopomp work, I was immediately interested in her situation. (Psychopomp is from the Greek word *psychopompos*, which means a conductor of souls.) However, if the teacher had given letter grades, he probably would have given me an 'F' for failure. Bottom of the class. I was a conscientious student but a very poor performer. Both visualization and communication were mostly vague or nonexistent.

Humbled by my poor performance, I contacted my instructor, a shaman *and* psychic, and asked him if he might want to look into the matter. This was not a common garden variety ghost; it had already frightened one Native American shaman away. "He ran out, white as a sheet!" is the way Charlotte put it. After my email, my instructor contacted Charlotte and told her his fee. She was even more frightened by the cost (\$450 USD), apparently, than she was by the ghost. And, as a renter she thought her landlord should pay. After all, it was his house that was haunted.

But Charlotte didn't want to talk to her landlord, because they had not been getting along recently, and she knew he would only laugh at her. She was convinced the spirit had nearly killed her and one of her cats. When I asked how she thought the ghost had tried to kill her, she said, "The heavy metal heater vent in the living room, fastened into the wall with big screws, was ripped out of the wall with accompanying screeching of torn metal, then thrown across the living room. It missed my cat, who had been sleeping in the sun, [and although]

it was thrown over him, probably a distance of 10-15 feet or so... I've always felt that if it wanted to hit the cat or me, it could have."

This incident happened years earlier, but it still worried her. She knew he (she was certain the ghost was a man) was still there. When I asked my instructor if he thought I should try to remove the ghost. He didn't say yes or no, but he did say that it sounded like a particularly nasty and aggressive spirit, and he didn't really want to do it, because he was more interested in his work as a healer.

By this time, my wife had become worried and didn't want me to get involved. She was especially afraid the ghost might follow me home. I asked my instructor if there was any possibility this "nasty and aggressive spirit" could follow me home. "Of course," he said. "And, there could be more than one!" Then he spent the next 10 or 15 minutes talking about the different experiences he had doing psychopomp work. One house required several long sessions, 9 hours total, and he guided about 60 lost souls from Middle World to the Spirit World. He then said that Charlotte's ghost may not just be angry and aggressive, it could be pure evil.

That night, like every night, I had to answer the call of my old prostate and get up numerous times to pee. Each time I got up I felt fear and started at every little sound, but by morning I was OK. It would be lunacy to be involved with the ghost or ghosts at Charlotte's house any longer. If a professional shaman with years of experience was reluctant to deal with this spirit, then it would be ridiculous for me to even consider it. But, then, in the middle of my morning meditations, right in the middle of Stick Action Meditation, an idea came to me suddenly, and just as suddenly, I had a plan.

Part Two

I'm a Stoic. I don't believe there is such a thing as "pure evil." Evil does not exist in Nature; it only exists in the human will. And even there, it is simply the lack of virtue. In addition, I was keenly aware of responsibilities to the Stoic community. I couldn't be running off and trying to do something dangerous for which I have no talent and no experience at all (except in a weekend class that in my own mind I clearly failed). On the other hand, Charlotte, my neighbor, had to live with this ghost, or angry and lost soul, or whatever it is, all the time, every night and day. That's just not right. To ignore a neighbor in distress is certainly not Stoic; but, what could I do?

I was in the middle of my morning practice of Stick Action Meditation when the thought came to me: "If I were an atheist, ghosts wouldn't bother me at all." To someone who believes death is extinction, ghosts and lost souls are complete nonsense, and maybe that's the greatest immunity there is. Immediately after that thought, I remembered two of my neighbors had mentioned they were

atheists—one was a retired lawyer, and the other had once been a Navy Seal. While I was trying to decide who would be better to invite to go with me, an old lawyer or an old Navy Seal, something else happened.

A very large hawk swooped down and flew just a few feet above my head. The only reason I knew it was just above my head, despite the half-light of early dawn and the silence of its wings, is because just before it flew over me it made a kind of gentle clucking sound, causing me to look up. I've never heard a hawk make that sound; I've only heard them screech. And another thing, it flew just above my head while I was doing the most active part of Stick Action Meditation, where I'm rowing with the stick. It was amazing to see it silently gliding six feet or less above my head.

I didn't think too much more about it until I told my wife later that day. She got out one of her books on messages from the universe, then she looked up an Internet website on hawk symbolism. Here is a brief summation of what it said.

"When Hawk swoops into your life, be ready for a whole new level of awareness developing in your mind and spirit. Hawk bears observation skills and broad perspectives on his wings.... It is not unusual for Hawk to inspire a time when you begin working heavily with new divination methods. Effectively, you're learning to trust your inner guidance and Higher Self. Do not simply brush off gut instincts as being happenstance."

But, first, I had to arrange a time when I could meet this angry, aggressive ghost. I wrote another email to Charlotte explaining what I wanted to do. Once I got her agreement, I would contact Brad, the former Navy Seal and atheist, to see if he would go along. Intuitively, he was my first choice. No rational reason; it's not like he can fight a ghost with his fists. My theory is that having an atheist with me would weaken the spirit's power. I haven't read this anywhere, it's only an untested theory. And, I can only hope I'm right, because the atheist would be there for my protection.

Charlotte wrote back. She was afraid. The ghost had not been active lately, and she was worried I might rile it up. Maybe we should wait, she said. I wrote and explained what I would attempt to do, but agreed it may be wise to let sleeping dogs lie—at least for a while.

Part Three

A couple of years ago, before I understood psychopomp at all, I had a situation with a "ghost" who let me feel the pain that caused her suicide. That may be why I wanted to take the shamanic psychopomp class. I won't discuss the details of why I was meditating on the life and death of this woman, I hardly knew her, but

later that day I began to feel pain in my teeth and jaw on the left side of my face.

After about a week of this pain, I told my wife I was going to see a dentist. When she asked why, I told her about this pain and where it was. She was surprised and said it was exactly how her friend had described the pain she had endured for years before giving up and committing suicide. It was my wife's friend and she knew details. I did not.

I had no idea when Charlotte might need my help, if ever, but if she did, I wanted to be ready. I definitely wanted an atheist with me. The suicide ghost who earlier shared her pain with me was a nice person, generally, and I was beginning to wonder what might happen if I made contact with one who had not been a nice person and who did not wish me well. I've had experience with living people like that, criminals I've worked with at an honor camp, and they commonly don't reason readily or well. If my theory worked, the atheist may deflect some of their anger simply by not being frightened of them. Or, wait! Would it make an angry ghost even angrier? Oops. I hadn't thought of that.

First thing in the morning I phoned Brad and asked if I could talk to him in person about a private matter. He told me to come over at 2 pm. I was planning to tell him that my theory was he would be like a lightning rod, that the ghost would hit him and the anger would be deflected. How could it affect someone who didn't believe in angry ghosts? But, just to be fair, I was going to tell him his indifference may have the opposite effect. I really didn't know, but if the ghost actually got through to him, would that prove there was life after death? Wouldn't that be worth this experiment?

When we met up, I first confirmed that he was an atheist, then hastened to tell him I wasn't there to change his mind. In fact, I was counting on it. Then I told him the reason why and gave it my best pitch. Certainly, a frightened neighbor, a retired school teacher living alone, deserved our help to calm her fears. He wouldn't have to do anything, just sit there. I would do all the work. I explained a little about the nature of psychopomp work, that people had been doing this since ancient Greece, and so on. He said no. No discussion. Just, no. No! So, I changed the subject.

Well, now what? Should I talk to the old lawyer, the other known atheist on our street? He once suggested we have coffee together, and "if I had an open mind" he would convince me he was right. He was quite confident in his powers of persuasion and in his Nihilistic point of view. At the time, I agreed that we should do that, but I didn't tell him I would have to *close* my mind, not open it, to be an atheist. I thought about it and thought about it and decided he would be even harder to sell on the idea than the old Navy Seal. If anything happened to upset his empty but comfortably settled world view, he was a lawyer after all, and lawyers like to sue.

I decided to go through my psychopomp workshop notes. It was a bit of a mess—typical class notes hastily written, half sentences, words missing, shabbily organized. I remembered the work Arrian must have had to do to rewrite his notes taken in Epictetus's class. When I was done it felt good to see that by working through the scribbled mess I had very explicit instructions. I knew exactly what I could and should do. At least, I thought I did.

the Conclusion

Charlotte came to our house on a Sunday afternoon. She had a bag of cat goodies and toys for the three cats belonging to my wife's parents. They had just moved here from Florida, and they were also cat lovers. Charlotte knew that. We didn't invite her in because of the coronavirus thing at the time, so she stood in the doorway and talked to us through her face mask. She told us the ghost was active again; it scared one of her cats, chasing it around the house, and causing it to cower in fear behind the couch. She said she yelled at it, calling it bad names, and telling it to get out once and for all. "Get out!" she said. She was really mad.

I told her that one day this week, I would send an ally to her house to see if there was anything we could learn. I had a plan. I wouldn't go to her house at all; the ally would go and check it out. (An ally is what shamans call a compassionate spirit from the spirit world who agrees to help.) But, to send an ally I had to have her permission to send it into her house. She agreed, then said she didn't want the ghost to follow me and come to my house. I assured her it would not, that my ally wouldn't let that happen. (At least, I hoped it wouldn't.)

I had already made a plan—even though I didn't know if the ghost was going to get active and bother Charlotte again. Regardless of whether or not it became active I already had enough information to outline what I would do if or when it ever came back. Now that it was back, the next day, a Monday, shortly after 5 am, while I was in my monastery room I journeyed to the neighbor's house. I wasn't there in person, I was journeying as shamans do. Here's what I did.

1. I journeyed to Lower World (LW) to get two Power Animals and an Ally and bring them back to my monastery room in my house in Middle World (MW) with me. I told them about the psychopomp work that we were going to do, and they agreed to help.
2. When we came to MW, I left them in the monastery then went to Upper World (UW) to get a daimon ally. After explaining the situation and our intention, I merged with her when I brought her back to MW. By merging with her I knew I would become stronger.
3. Still journeying. We all stood in the cull-d-sac in front of Charlotte's house.
4. One power animal growled so loudly (I didn't know he was going to do this) it was as if we were within a protective bubble. Having merged with my

5. daimon ally on my way down from Upper World I was faintly glowing. I didn't know that was going to happen either.
6. My flying Power Animal (PA) left us in the bubble and went inside Charlotte's house. She came out a short time later with a small rodent in her beak—a mouse or a rat. We followed her to LW where she put the thing on the ground and we all stood around. It did nothing. I was told by my Power Animals that they would stay with it and I could leave.
7. I thanked them and returned to MW, then UW, leaving my daimon and ending the journey.

That's all. Did it work? Was it real? Would Charlotte have any more difficulty with this ghost? I didn't know. I had questions. A couple of days later I ran into her and she had questions, but I only told her that the ghost would be gone. That Friday, I journeyed again to LW to speak alone with the Power Animal, that went inside Charlotte's house. I asked, who was this person, this ghost? It told me all it knew was that the apparition was a man who enjoyed being a bully when he was alive, that he actually took pleasure in intimidating others and felt power when they were afraid. Charlotte had the perfect place for his foolishness—scaring an old lady and her cats.

I asked the Power Animal if it tried to intimidate her, and she laughed. His power was nothing compared to hers. She handled him the same way you handle any bully. She puffed herself up to a very large size then made a fierce face at him. She compared it to what we do as children making scary faces in the mirror for fun—but it worked. He shrunk in fear, just as he caused others to shrink in fear, and she simply picked him up to take with her. I saw it as a mouse or rodent, because it's what I would expect to see in her beak. We talked more, but I won't discuss that here. I thanked her and returned to MW, opened my eyes and I was home.

Epilogue

Charlotte asked what she could give me for my psychopomp services. I told her I especially enjoyed Harry & David pears, the special box they prepare for Christmas. The next Christmas I got a box of Harry & David pears from her. We never discussed the ghost. A couple of years, when my wife had the Covid virus and was quarantined, she took me to a doctor's appointment for cataract surgery, then drove me home when it was over. On the way home just when she let me out in front of my house she thanked me for getting rid of her ghost and said she hadn't had anymore incidents with it. To this day I haven't been involved with psychopomp work and haven't had any reason to.

^^^

Animal Messengers

The Swallows

[Excerpt from *Honor Camp*, a book about my experience as a Correctional Deputy (1994-6) for the San Diego Probation Department]

This is happened at a California honor camp, a work camp, a medium security jail for convicted adult male felons. I was a Correctional Deputy there. The name of the place was Camp Barrett, named after Barrett Lake, located a couple of hundred yards on the other side of a 12 foot, chain link fence topped with razor wire. We were hidden in the back country invisible from any home or highway and surrounded by hills of fat boulders, native grasses, and California oak 35 miles east of the city of San Diego on the southern edge of the Cleveland National Forest just north of the Mexican border

Being cooped up with a lot of strangers, mostly criminals, misfits, and social rejects, for seven days in a remote back country location takes a little getting used to. Some officers never really get used to it, or maybe it's just their unpleasant personalities wherever they are, and they take it out on the inmates and on one another. I usually have less trouble with the inmates than with those officers I'm talking about and who probably know I'm talking about them. Some people are never easy to like even on their good days. The job attracts people like that, abusive and mean-spirited people with a badge, but overall it's a good job and I'm comfortable being surrounded by wilderness out here in this manly village. The native, non-human inhabitants make it all worthwhile. You can see animal relationships here that you will never see in the city.

Here's what I'm talking about. Do you know what a swallow does when another swallow tries to take over the mud nest it is building? The rightful owner of the half finished nest who was temporarily away getting mud from the sewage treatment pool flies up to the interloper, grabs it by the shoulders, furiously flaps those powerful wings that recently carried it thousands of miles from its winter home in South America, and pulls the miscreant out. Then it calmly places the daub of mud it was carrying onto the construction site where it belongs.

The swallows build their mud nests in the eaves of the officer's quarters where I spend the night while at camp. After my 12-hour shift I would stop for a few minutes and watch them hard at work, a male and female couple for each nest, two or three feet apart and located about two or three feet above my head. The

nest was roughly the size of a cereal bowl with a small opening near the top, barely big enough for one swallow to fit through. But the nest itself was big enough for both swallows to occupy along with their offspring.

One evening I stopped at one of the nests on my way to my room and began to talk to the swallows who were settling in for the night. None of the other officers were near. I told them how much I admired their incredible strength and flying skill, and within a few seconds first one then the other swallow appeared at the nest opening. They didn't appear to be alarmed and I continued to tell them how much I admired them, repeating myself over and over, and the two swallows began to sway in unison from side to side. I was amazed and looked around to see if anyone else was seeing this. No, We were alone. I continued droning on and on about how wonderful they were, and as long as I stood there they swayed back and forth in rhythm to the cadence of my voice. I did this repeatedly night after night at one nest after another, and they all responded the same.

Then one day, early in the morning on my way to work when the mud swallow babies were sleeping snugly in their mud nests and their parents were out hunting for breakfast, I watched while six or seven crows quietly flew to the nests, broke them open, and with a few sharp jabs of their beaks, spilled the babies out onto the sidewalk below. With the injured babies floundering on the sidewalk below the crows swooped down and scooped them up to a nearby tree to be eaten.

In addition to the swallows and crows, squirrels, rabbits, coyote, foxes, cougars, wildcats, rattlesnakes, tarantulas, scorpions, black widow spiders, and brown recluses we have two camp dogs

Athena's Owl

In 2008, When I was creating the College of Stoic Philosophers, I was looking through a book on Greek mythology to find a patron for the College. I was in my monastery at the time, studying the book until I came upon Athena and knew immediately she was the one. I went out to tell my wife my decision and she shushed me. "Listen," she said. There was an owl hooting next to our house. In the eleven years we had lived there we had never seen or heard an owl in our neighborhood. As you know, the owl is Athena's favorite animal.

Mothra

17 JUL 18: Tuesday: MW:

Today, I finished 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 in 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.”

This 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 *The Book*. That is why I am including this in the epilogue. I know people—college educated, middle class Americans—who would be frightened of this omen. That's the danger of piling fiction on 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 shamanic work when we don't use our skepticism filter.

20 JUL 18: Friday: 0530: MW:

About 5:30 am, I was doing my Stick Action Meditation exercise 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 it had flown to a different side of the room.

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 to, but that she still 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 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, halfway through my Stick Action Meditation exercises in the half light of the 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, then reversed course and flew back to me, circled my head, then flew North and out of sight.

Hawk

[See “Things that Go Bump in the Night: A New Theory regarding Spectral Apparitions also known as Ghosts,” found in the section on Shamanic Journeys]

Coyote on the Roof

[This was originally written for the monks of The Stoic Monastery as “Abbot's Observation #54-5” in August of 2021]

19 JUL 21: 3:20 AM—according to my nightstand clock. I've been awakened by the sound of a coyote barking nearby. I mean REALLY nearby. It sounded as if he was barking right outside my bedroom window. (I'm going to call it a male rather than guess at its gender or call it an it.) For those of you who have heard a coyote barking you know that distinctive sound. It has this muscular Bark! Bark! Bark! followed by a high pitched, yip-yip-yip-yip-yip!

I closed my eyes and waited for him to stop so I could go back to sleep. He kept barking. Finally, I got up, went to the back porch door, peaked out the window and looked around. Well, he wasn't right beside my bedroom window. Where was he, and why did he keep barking? I turned on the porch light, opened the door and said, "Quiet! Stop barking! Shh. Quiet! Stop that noise! But he kept on.

I couldn't see him anywhere even though he sounded as if he was just a few feet away. I turned off the porch light to see if he might come out and reveal himself. There's a tall hedge about 10 feet from my back door separating our property from the neighbor's driveway and house. The neighbor's name is Bob. Maybe he was just on the other side of the hedge. Maybe he had killed one of Bob's little dogs and was celebrating—as they commonly do after a kill.

I was dark. There were clouds covering the stars, the moon wouldn't be full for four days, and the coyote kept barking. Finally, I just happened to look above the hedge and could see Bob's roof dimly lit by a nearby street light. There it was! About 20 meters away, he was standing on top of the roof, a pitched roof, not a flat roof. The coyote was straddling the peak of the roof and barking at the night for all he was worth.

In 76 years, I've never seen anything like that, and for a second I wondered if I was dreaming. No, there really was a coyote on the peak of the neighbor's roof, still barking, and I really was standing there in my underwear watching him do this. I grabbed a flashlight. I always keep by the back door. He was big, as big as an adult male coyote gets, and when I told him once more to be quiet, he stopped barking and looked directly at me.

We stared at each for awhile. His eyes gleamed in the beam of my flashlight, it's a powerful beam, and he looked away for a minute then slowly walked down the backside of the roof, then out of sight. I stood there in my underwear to see if he would return, but he didn't. I went back to bed.

The next day I asked neighbor Bob if he heard the coyote barking just a few feet above his bed. He didn't hear a thing. A couple of days later I asked the neighbors just across the street from Bob. They were probably about as close as I was to all that barking, and the coyote was actually facing in their direction when he was barking. It must have been as loud for them as it was for me. Nope. Didn't hear a thing.

Every day since, I haven't been able to get this image and experience out of my mind. The more I thought about it the more meaningful it became. As you may recall from Abbot's Observation #28 of 10 May 20, "A very large hawk swooped down and flew just a few feet above my head. The only reason I knew it was just above my head, despite the half light of early dawn and the silence of its wings, is

because just before it flew over me it made kind of gentle clucking sound, causing me to look up.”

Was this coyote barking on the roof another so-called message from the universe? After a week of thinking about the meaning of this experience, I decided it was time to do some research.

Was the coyote barking on the roof at 3:20 AM a message from the universe? Maybe. It is certainly reasonable for a Stoic to believe in that possibility, and here's the reason why. In Stoic ontology, our theory about the natural world, the cosmos is a unified whole that is conscious and providential, a living being. The Stoic cosmos has *cosmic sympathy* whereby all points in space are connected.

So, if we believe the Stoic cosmos is conscious and providential, a living being with cosmic sympathy whereby all points are connected, then it should not be difficult to also believe that a coyote barking on the roof may be a message from the universe. But, what's the message?

In truth, I have never before tried to find out what a Message from the Universe (MU) means. How would I know if I had an MU? And, what is the message? My wife says there's such a thing, but before the hawk swooped down a couple of feet above my head and chuckled in May of 2020, I had never considered it.

Actually, that's not true. There was another time thirteen years ago when I know I got an MU, but I didn't know that was what it was called. I thought I should at least find out what the Internet says about such things. I Googled, “What are messages from the universe?”

OMG! What a load of rubbish. One website after another that addressed MU left me in a state embarrassment. Simply *awful*. They tried, but the lot of them, and I must have read at least a dozen, were so far down the fantasy rabbit hole it sounded like they were just making stuff up. However, there was a plausible theme running throughout. That is, the universe is trying to send you a message that you need right now, so pay attention. None of them even tried to explain *how* a MU is possible. The physics was just assumed.

So, the question now is, who or what sent a coyote to the top of a roof next to my house at 3:20 AM to send me a message? Are there gods, demi-gods, or daimones doing things like this? Surely there must be an easier way to communicate with mortals? Perhaps not, and for the sake of argument, it doesn't matter. It becomes a message from the universe . . .

1. if the experience was so extraordinary you can't stop thinking about it. If this goes on for awhile and you find yourself thinking about it every day,

2. then you need to research the symbolism and consider intuitively which aspects of the symbolism apply to you and your life at this time.
3. Think about it. Does it have value as a guide to answering your questions or concerns about the direction your life is taking? If it does,
4. then act upon it.

If the experience was important enough for you to go through these four steps, then regardless of who or what sent this message, or if it was just a really coincidental meeting of two beings in the same space and time, then it was a message from the universe. Why? Because from this meeting you found meaning and guidance for your life.

As to whether or not the symbolic meaning(s) appear right and true, you can use the Stoic test for the acquisition of knowledge and proceed with confidence. As Epictetus said, "What is the basis of assent to anything? It's appearing to be true (*Discourses*, bk. 1: ch. 28)."

There are many kinds of meetings and meanings that can suggest a message. Some information appears to be true, while some information clearly does not. That doesn't mean it's all bad and must be thrown out. You decide in the end what you need in you life. With careful examination, messages from the universe can guide believers and skeptics alike.

Cathartes Aura: Sage of the Animal Kingdom

On the 17th of January, 2024, I was nearly finished with the Eternal Questions issue #13. It had been a good writing day, and at 4 PM I took a break and had a cup of coffee outside on the deck. I needed a break to think about the issue that really concerned me: issue #14, "On Heroes and Daimones." That was next, and I knew from my research that this issue was going to be hard.

Deep in thought, I saw a vulture flying directly toward me. I see vultures around occasionally because I live on a hill where they are clearly visible off in the distance as they circle around looking for the dead and dying. But this one wasn't off in the distance soaring a thousand feet above, this one was low, really low, just above eye level and gliding directly toward me. I put my coffee cup down and stood up to look more closely. Then I saw a second vulture right behind it.

Whoa! What's going on. In the 27 years I've lived here I've never seen a vulture so close and flying so low. And then behind the first two, vulture number 3 and vulture number 4 appeared. They simply materialized behind the first two. And

although I was already looking intently in that direction I couldn't see where they actually came from. The first vulture looked at me as it glided passed, maybe 50 feet in front of me. It was close enough that I could see its eye and that it had a red head, which meant it was a turkey vulture, *cathartes aura*, cleansing gold.

A singular and extraordinary experience of this kind is sometimes called a message from the universe. That doesn't mean the universe is actually creating animals or events specifically for someone's benefit. Some may think the universe does that, but I prefer to think of it as a fortuitous and wonderful experience that can offer advice if we bother to take the time and study animal facts and symbolic meanings. I knew virtually nothing about turkey vultures. I didn't even know it was a turkey vulture until I looked it up in my Western Bird Book and found that the red head distinguishes it from the black-headed Black Vulture, a close cousin.

On an Internet search of symbolism for vultures I learned for the first time that in many cultures who care about such things that it is considered one of the truly great animals of the animal kingdom. To have such an experience was very important, because what the turkey vulture is and what it symbolizes mythologically is simply amazing. Those who study and care about such things widely regard the turkey vulture as the most noble of all the birds in the sky. But first, I want talk about some of the facts we know from the work of ornithologists.

Just the facts

Here is a partial list of the things I learned from several authoritative sources, such as National Audubon Society, University of Wisconsin, et cetera:

- The turkey vulture is the most widespread of the New World vultures—ranging from Canada to the southern tip of South America.
- It weighs about 3 pounds with a wingspan of 6 feet. It travels up to 200 miles per day. Its feet are useless for catching and holding prey but it has a powerful and sharp beak for ripping open the toughest carcass skins.
- They can smell a dead animal up to a mile away, and have the largest olfactory nervous system of all birds.
- Vultures have been seen by pilots in aircraft soaring at 20,000 feet, rising above storm clouds to keep out of thunder, lightening, and rain.
- They do NOT eat just any old dead thing. They prefer fresh meat and won't eat anything older than 4 days. The only live animals they will eat are insects and fish.
- They don't have vocal cords and can only make two hissing sounds: one sound when threatened and another for communicating with their kind.
- The Turkey Vulture's stomach acid is so acidic it can digest just about anything. This also allows them to eat carcasses tainted with anthrax, tuberculosis, rabies, and other diseases without getting sick, providing an essential service for the health of our ecosystems. Without them, carcasses

- would accumulate, and diseases would spread from rotting flesh.
- In the United States it is illegal to take, kill, or possess turkey vultures, their eggs, and any body parts. Violation of this law is punishable by a fine of up to \$100,000 for individuals or \$200,000 for organizations, and/or a prison term of 1 year.
- When they are threatened by another animal they defend themselves by throwing up on them.

Symbolism

Most of the following material is quoted or paraphrased from a website called "Animal Hype" written by by Elise McDonald, a wildlife blogger, and author who has been working with the National Wildlife Federation for the past five years. Here is a brief summary of the many symbolism references to vultures in general, not just cathartes aura:

- Vultures symbolize the cycle of death and rebirth, purity, patience, protection, and trust. When the vulture glides into your life, you are sure to undergo a new beginning because vulture symbolism is linked to rebirth and purification of the soul. Vultures are also considered as messengers between the material world and the spiritual world.
- The vulture totem is often perceived as a messiah of the sky. It owns the wind currents that offer it a steady flight, showing a sign of intelligence as it watches and observes every action on the ground. The vulture symbolizes the importance of being tactical and analytical, especially before beginning a new venture or chapter in one's life.
- The vulture also shows a sense of community and unity, as they rarely mind sharing their food with others.
- No other bird in the animal kingdom can make the best out of their resources like that of the vulture, and having the vulture spirit animal in your life brings forth an array of new opportunities that promises abundance and good fortune.

Then the author simply lists the traits referenced in the text. After reading the list my first thought was that this was the best description of the Stoic sage I had ever read. After reading the list a second time it was clear to me which of these traits specifically applied to me at this time in my life:

- Watchful
- Loyal
- Cautious
- Serious
- Analytical
- Patient
- Tactical

- Tolerant
- Smart
- Aware
- Clean
- Introspective
- Perceptive
- Patient
- Protective
- Disciplined
- Impervious
- Ingenious

Conclusion

Before the turkey vulture flew into my life I only knew two things about it: its wingspan allowed it to soar at great heights for long periods of time, and that it ate dead animals. That was it. After researching factual and symbolic information about the vulture my appreciation of this remarkable messenger was multiplied many times. I also gained a greater awareness and understanding about what I personally was facing in my work at this time. I learned all this from my new teacher, this noble sage of the sky, *cathartes aura*, cleansing gold.

^^^

Spirit Drawings

1986: San Diego, California. To understand the Spirit Drawings it is necessary to go back to the first Chapter on Strange Dreams. Specifically, the spirit drawings began at the time of the Five Dreams. That period in my life was the foundation of what follows. That was the beginning of my monastery of one, a morning ritual of discipline in a cold room.

Perfect wa

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. This was ritual. 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 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 the boss, 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 Metaesthetics Manifesto

The following are quotations from my journal of that time.

October 1983. Nishikiwa, Japan. The essence of aesthetics is beyond commerce, conceit, coercion, patronage, and principles of rational analysis. It is the phenomenon of existence revealing itself. The phenomenon is revealed when the artist obeys impulse, when the hand and eye follow, not lead the action and design of intuition. The result may and may not refer to a comprehensible symbol of nature. It is a spark from the fire, neither good nor evil, showing the face behind the mask.

The Log: Day One

There were repeated trials and errors over weeks, but finally I was able to find the ritual that had meaning for me and could be repeated exactly every time. That was "day one."

05 DEC 83: 7 degrees C at 7:01 AM: 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 made until I was able to find the circle, the "Perfect wa" for which I had been searching.

04 FEB 84: 3 degrees C @ 7:10 AM: Today, in spite of a mild hangover, or because of it, the first exhibition quality circle was produced—complete with aura. An unusual thing occurred...I just sat there, looking at [the drawing paper] 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....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.

NOTE: *The sumi e brush form I intuitively wanted to do, the circle, I later discovered to be a form of Zen art. After leaving Japan and living in Hawaii, I took a job as a Supervisor in a market research company (Louis, Singer, Ankersmit, and Soon). On one occasion in late 1984 my work took me to the University of Hawaii in Honolulu where I was speaking to a couple of marketing classes. I had a break for lunch between the classes, so I went to the art section of the book stacks of the university library. I leafed through a book on Zen art where I discovered the Ensō—and was astonished! It was Perfect wa. The ensō symbolizes absolute enlightenment, strength, elegance, the universe, and mu (the void).*



Perfect wa

Impulse Spirit Drawings

It was three or 4 years after the Perfect wa meditation practice that I took up sumi e drawing again, but this time I had another idea. This time I wanted to go in another direction: from the First Dream to the Second Dream, from the dream encouraging me to meditate to the random brush strokes of the early pubescent child. I continued to meditate, but instead of drawing a clearly defined form, the determined 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."

It was called impulse after the creative impulse of my spirit. I never knew another artist to draw this way, although the American abstract expressionist Jackson Pollack's drip and splash techniques had a randomness that could be remotely similar. I never thought of Pollack before or after these drawings. It never seemed relevant. Aesthetically, I always felt closer to Isamu Noguchi although he didn't do anything even remotely similar. I only mention Noguchi because he was the 20th century sculptor I most admired, and on the day following his death I did an impulse drawing in his honor, which became the one I most cherish. It currently hangs framed above my bed in my monastery room.

The first 10 or more times I made an Impulse drawing that I felt was worth keeping I was sure it was just luck, and I doubted I would be lucky 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, my "metaaesthetics" odyssey was complete.

Describing the Impulse Spirit Drawings

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. The impulse of my creative spirit provides 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.

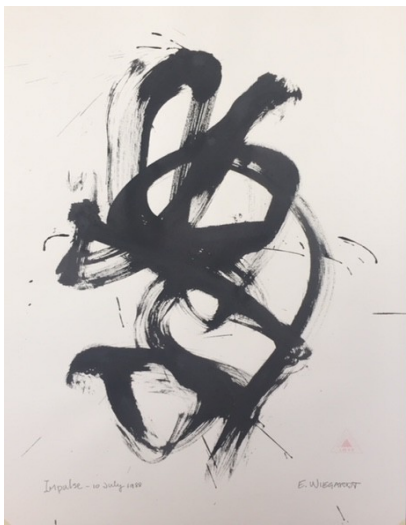
The Ceremony

On the evening 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 a deep 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.

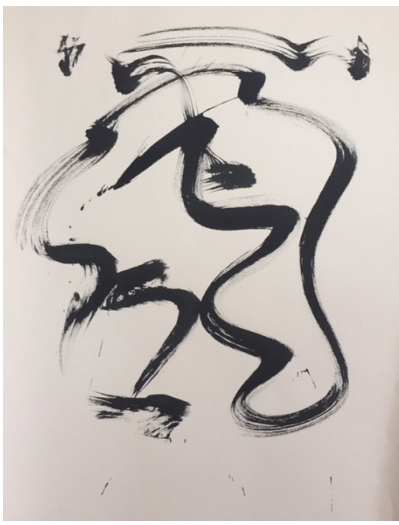
The Spirit Drawings

When I quit artistic effort for Stoic philosophy I had hundreds of drawing that were weighing heavily on my consciousness and holding me back from getting on with my life. After years and numerous futile and embarrassing efforts knocking on the door 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 that world. To continue begging to be seen by those whom I no longer respected seemed ridiculous. I destroyed all but a handful, the most representative and favorite of what I had done. "Burn them and be free," the voice in my head kept telling me. And so I did, nearly all of them, but I kept a dozen or so favorite images of my creative spirit. See the next page for "Nine Impulse Drawings."

Nine Impulse Spirit Drawings



07/10/88



07/17/88



07/31/88



02/06/94



03/13/94



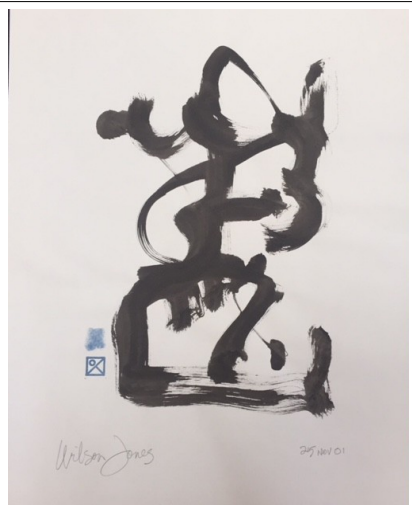
09/11/94



06/17/01



07/08/01



11/24/01

Miscellaneous

A Pot of Gold

It was the spring of 1978 when my wife Claire and I were driving down the Willamette Valley from Salem where we were temporarily staying her brother to Eugene where I was planning to go to graduate school. It was a typical spring day—cool, wet cloudy with bits of sunshine and rain. The freeway, Interstate 5, is in the middle of farmers fields flat and still dark with burn off before the spring planting. Anyone who has spent any time in this region of Oregon at this time of year knows exactly what the conditions were that I'm describing.

Did you ever wonder about the origins of the old saying that there's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It's something like what grownups tell children about catching a bird. All you have to do is put salt on its tail, and it's yours. It doesn't take long before the child realizes that the closer you get the further away the the bird and the end of the rainbow travels. Right? Wrong. There is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and I know because I got there. In fact, it came to me, and Claire was my witness. It's not a pot of gold, however. It's simply a brilliant golden light.

It was a typically rainy Oregon spring day when a rainbow suddenly appeared with one end coming out of a farmer's field East of us and the other end in my lap. Right through the window, into my lap, down to the floor, and onto my feet onto the pedals of the car. Claire was in the passenger seat beside me. I asked if she saw what I saw. She did. I looked at other passengers in other cars to see if they were looking at me strangely as we drove down the highway together, but no one appeared to notice. It was a golden light, absolutely bursting with intensity, and it followed me for miles, at least several miles, it seemed like 10 minutes before it suddenly vaporized.

Now maybe this happens to people all the time, but I've never heard of it, and it never happened to me again. I was hoping I might have acquired some kind of super powers, or at least my fortune in the accumulation of wealth might have changed. No. Nothing changed.

Hallucinating in the Sierra Madres

I've only had one vision in my life, and I've had it three times. The first time was the end of summer in Mexico in 1979. I was on my way back to the University of

Oregon for my final year of graduate school. I had traveled 3rd class around the country for about a month examining and sketching preColumbian art—from the Mesoamerica Museum of San Crystobal de la Casas to the Rufino Tamayo Museum in Oaxaca. I bought a train ticket from Mexico City to Nogales, Arizona on the the US border. As soon as I settled into my seat, a boisterous group of four young men pushed and shoved into the seats behind me. I turned around and greeted them in English. One of the four understood what I said.

About 20 miles south of Guadalajara, the train stopped for about 15 minutes before an announcer spoke in Spanish over a loudspeaker. Everyone got their bags, boxes, packs, and suitcases and began to get off. If you've seen the movie, "Trains, Planes and Automobiles," you will know what happened next. We all got off the train and walked what seemed like a half a mile through the stubble of a farmer's field. I had no idea where we were going, or why. I asked the young man who understood English what was going on. He explained that the train in front of us had an accident and we needed to walk to a waiting bus that would take us to Guadalajara where we could make other arrangements. I didn't want "other arrangements," but stayed close to my new friend, Jorge.

Jorge was a student on break from the University of Mexico D.F., and he had been an exchange student to the US several years before. His English was excellent. Basically, he took me under his wing and helped me transfer my train ticket at the central train station to a night bus ticket at the bus station nearby. It was bureaucratic puzzle that left me agog, but didn't seem to impress or bother Jorge at all.

So, we're sitting together on the night bus to Guaymas, a small town on the Sea of Cortez, 250 miles south of Nogales where I had intended to go by train. In Guadalajara, Jorge had helped me exchanged my train ticket to the US border to a bus ticket to Guaymas, his home town, and he assured me I could take a Ferry across the Sea of Cortez and a bus up the Baja peninsula to San Diego. He seemed like a decent young man, and I wanted to believe him.

Packed. Every seat on the night bus was taken—plus children, chickens, and goats in the aisle. Jorge warned me that the bus drivers through the Sierra Madres had a daredevil reputation they had to maintain for macho reasons and we would be taking a lot of tight turns at a high rate of speed. Better not to look down over the precipices when the bus leans that way. I already knew he was likely telling the truth, because this was not my first bus ride in Mexico. It was my first through the Sierra Madres, however.

It was late. I was trying to sleep. We stopped at a small village, and my generous companion bought me a Coke. I don't often drink Coca-cola, but there are times when nothing tastes better, such as when it's a roasting hot night and you're on a

mad bus ride through the Sierra Madres. I was grateful. I finished my Coke and closed my eyes.

As soon as my eyelids were down, there appeared a vision of brilliant colors and strange shapes I had never seen before. I opened my eyes. The colors and images were gone. I closed my eyes. They came back. I didn't feel sick. I didn't feel anything unusual at all, and I began to wonder if Jorge had slipped some LSD in my Coke. I had never taken LSD, but it was the only thing I could think of. I looked over at him sitting there next to me. His head was resting on the bus window. He was sound asleep. Or was he? I watched and watched until I was sure he wasn't smirking behind his snore.

I closed my eyes and there it was again! Immediately. Startling and brilliant. Organic and abstract shapes, large and small, quietly changing both in size, form, and colors, but always with an other worldly brilliance I had never see with "normal" eyes. These were not scenes from this planet, this world, and I tested the vision over and over. The show only started when my eyes were closed, then stopped when they were open. No words. No messages. No meaning as far as I could tell.

^^

I always wondered if Jorge had put something in my Coke until the end of summer in 1980. I was leaving Madrid, Spain, and it had been another trying day getting out of the city. Only this time it was my own fault. I bought a train ticket from Madrid to Florence, Italy, and it wasn't cheap, and I had to hurry to get to the correct platform before it left. When I got to the conductor the ticket was gone. I searched all my pockets, of course, and decided I must have left it back a the depot. I ran, luggage in hand, back to the station, searching the ground as I went just in case it had fallen out somewhere. Nowhere. I thought I should go to the agent from whom I had purchase the ticket but all the windows looked the same, and I wasn't sure which one it was. I went up to one and saw a small pile of crumpled paper beside the agent's window. Brushing the mess aside I saw my ticket at the bottom of the pile, grabbed it, and ran back to the train just as it was pulling away.

When I sat down I was hot, sweaty, and thoroughly exhausted. But, once again, I believed I had been helped by the kindness of a stranger. I was convinced someone had deliberately camouflaged my ticket with crumpled paper to make it appear without value until the rightful owner returned to claim it. Maybe. Anyway, the sun was going down and I was ready for a nap – if not a good night's sleep.

It happened again! The second I closed my eyes the vision of many forms, abstract forms that seemed organic but unrecognizable, brilliant in color in

constantly motion. It was still light outside. I could see the sun hanging above the plain. It was still August, and there were few others in my car. Vacationers would be returning to the city not leaving it. I closed my eyes and enjoyed the show. At least now I knew Jorge had not slipped something in my drink the year before. I had not had anything to eat or drink in hours. I tried to analyze what I was seeing, and why. After 20 minutes or so I fell asleep before coming to any conclusions.

^^

No matter how many times I tried to recover the vision I was totally unsuccessful. Not only could I not repeat the experience I couldn't remember a single image or fragment of an image. Whatever I saw was incapable of being grasped by my memory, and I forgot about it until it happened again five years later.

Amielle and I were in San Diego, California. We had recently returned from living in Hawaii and were interested in finding an apartment in San Diego, but on this trip I was mostly showing her around and trying to remember where things were after an absence of 20 years. I had lived there when I was in my late teens. It was September of 1985. We were not married but had been living together for nearly 4 years and had already had quite an adventurous lifestyle. We were out of money and living with my parents temporarily in San Bernardino until we could find a place in San Diego.

It was our last night in town, and we were planning to leave the city early in the morning. Nothing had "clicked" really, and we were not feeling terribly enthusiastic. We had already gone to bed when there was a loud knock on our seedy hotel room door. Who the hell could that be, we wondered? I didn't know anyone in San Diego. Fortunately there was a peep hole in the door, and I could look out into the hallway. A black man stood at the door. He was big, mean-looking, and had no business at our door late at night. I stood there watching him through the peep hole until he finally left. I went back to bed with a fresh case of acid indigestion.

The vision returned. The colors were not as vivid or as beautiful and alive, but it was the same vision. I watched it for awhile, opening and closing my eyes with the same result, but I tired of it before long and went to sleep. It never returned, and again I couldn't remember or hold on to even a fragment of any of the many images.

The Postcard

And now I have to back up. Because the visions were spread out over a period of six years I have to go back to another strange event that happened chronologically between the first and second vision of colors and forms. It was

July of 1980, I was in Paris, and I was not happy. I had been living in Oregon for many years and had come to intensely dislike the weather, with its short and all too often soggy summers there. After graduate school I took some of my savings and decided to go around the world. It was summertime, but I had to buy a sweater in London because it was so cold, it was cloudy and overcast in Amsterdam, and now it had been raining for the past two days in Paris. I was sick of it. I desperately wanted to see the sun. It had been a week in Paris and I hadn't seen everything I came to see, but I went to bed in a foul mood. I was planning to spend a few more days there then go to Italy, but I was so annoyed at the weather I wasn't sure if I should stay a single day longer.

That night I had a dream. My brother came to me in the dream and stood there silently without emotion as I ranted and raved about the nasty weather. He was older and a much more experienced traveler than I, and showed no reaction at all when I shouted about desperate I was to see the sun. Without a word he showed me a postcard. On the front of the card there was a photograph showing a great expanse of desert with a huge golden sun in the sky. In the foreground there were clay tile roofs of some kind. There wasn't any writing on the card, but when my brother and the dream disappeared I woke up and somehow knew it was Spain.

I hadn't even considered Spain as part of my itinerary. Maybe Greece after Italy, but not Spain. That all changed and I went to the train station that day and bought a night ticket to Madrid. After we came to the border we exchanged our modern French train for a Spanish train older than I was with wooden interiors and enclosed compartments with wooden benches facing each other. Along side the seating compartments, running the length of the car, was a passageway running from one car to the next. I slept upright and fitfully on the hard bench in our compartment, then woke up with the sun and went out into the passageway to find a toilet.

I looked out the bank of windows in front of me onto the great plain north of Madrid just as the sun came up. It was warm and shining brightly. There were clay tiled roofs of some buildings in the foreground. It was exactly the picture on the postcard.

The Hypnotist

The following is an excerpt from the book, The Path of the Sage written by the author and published as a Kindle book in 2013.

If we are only the sum total of our physical processes, the dynamic interaction of material molecules, then what is the self that routinely survives all these billions of bodily changes? Look at a photograph of a man or woman 20 years of age,

then look again at the same person 50 years later – he or she is almost unrecognizable. The science of anatomy and physiology says that physical changes in each molecule creates an entirely new body every seven years. And yet, the conscious self that goes on living through all these changes appears more or less continuous. A 70-year-old has had ten new bodies in his or her lifetime, but the self is the same self through it all. If the I of who I am can survive all these gradual, molecular deaths and rebirths over the span of a normal lifetime, why is it so hard to imagine the possibility of that same self surviving the more sudden and final molecular death at the end of it?

For a Stoic, it is reasonable to believe that consciousness of the self survives, because we believe that each of us is a spark or fragment of the World Soul, the universal consciousness. However, such a literal belief is not required. Some prefer to believe in total extinction, and that is their choice. At this point in our evolution as a philosophy, the Stoic position is akin to the Pyrrhonian skeptic, the classical skeptic, not the contemporary caricature of a skeptic. When someone says he is a skeptic today, this usually means he does *not* believe whatever he claims to be skeptical about, and stops there. The Pyrrhonian skeptic would say that he neither believes nor disbelieves, doesn't know or maybe he does, can't know or maybe he can, but he keeps on searching nonetheless.

Edelstein, and others, have criticized Stoic philosophy as being two-dimensional, of not providing for the dynamics of the spirit. There is the suggestion that this is why the Stoa was so easily routed by the Christian cult. Perhaps, but the Stoa did not become extinct, and the new Stoic does not have to settle for two-dimensional beliefs. We have more than a right, we have a responsibility to investigate new ideas to all the old questions. Unfortunately, today, as always, there is such outright lunacy and base charlatanry seeking respectability by claiming kinship to metaphysics that many thoughtful people may be prejudiced against such studies. Nevertheless, our pending confrontation with death, the truth or illusion of mortality, compels many of us to search further and deeper than Stoics have ever done before. For some Stoics, reconciliation to a finite life is the answer; for others, the search goes on.

Surely the soul survives the death of the body, for opposites are generated out of opposites, and life is the opposite of death.
Socrates, *Phaedo*

If academic and professional credentials are any assurance of competence, then perhaps the most credible account of the so-called spirit world comes to us from Dr. Brian Weiss, M.D., psychiatrist, graduate Phi Beta Kappa, *magna cum laude*, from Columbia University, graduate of Yale University Medical School where he did his Residency in Psychiatry, and Chairman of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami, Florida. Are you impressed enough to be curious? I was.

With that kind of background you would expect him to be surprised when he stumbled into the spirit world in the course of his practice. He was. He wrote a book about it, *Many Lives, Many Masters* (Simon & Schuster, 1988). Quoting from the back of the jacket, "As a traditional psychotherapist, Dr. Brian Weiss was astonished and skeptical when one of his patients began recalling past-life traumas that seemed to hold the key to her recurring nightmares and anxiety attacks. His skepticism was eroded, however, when she began to channel messages from the 'space between lives,' which contained remarkable revelations about Dr. Weiss's family and his dead son. Using past-life therapy, he was able to cure the patient and embark on a new, more meaningful phase of his own career."

This is a doctor who over the course of that career treated thousands of psychiatric patients and directed inpatient units at four major medical schools. Did this doctor, who had all his life considered himself to be a man of science, suddenly become delusional and lose all control of his skeptical faculties? His patient mentioned above, Catherine, a young woman in her twenties, was a "relatively simple and honest person....not a scholar, and she could not have invented the facts, details....[that were] beyond her capacity."

Intrigued by all this, but still skeptical, I decided to do a little more research on the subject. That's when I discovered Michael Newton, Ph.D, a psychotherapist recently retired from practice in California who had made this subject his life's work. Over the course of his career, Dr. Newton used hypnosis to regress over 4000 clients to a past life, then brought them forward to the death in that life—and beyond. According to these many deeply hypnotized subjects, shortly after death the spirit of the individual returns to a spirit world before reincarnating again. This time between incarnated lives became Newton's specialty, which he calls Life Between Lives (LBL) hypnosis. The accounts of his experiences with LBL hypnosis he wrote in several books. He summarized the principles of these discoveries in the Appendix of *Life Between Lives* (Llewellyn Publications, 2006), several of which are included here:

- The most consistent reports of the soul's demonstrated essence is that it represents intelligent energy that is immortal and manifested by specific vibrational waves of light and color.
- Souls reincarnate with human beings for countless lifetimes to advance through levels of development by addressing karmic tasks from former lifetimes.
- Our planet is one of an incalculable number of worlds that serve as training schools for the advancement of souls.
- Spiritual malevolence does not exist within the divine order of love and compassion that comprises our spiritual origins.
- Rather than being defined as a place of ultimate inaction, or nirvana, the spirit world appears to be a space of transition for souls who evolve into higher energy forms....

- The ultimate goal of all souls appears to be the desire to seek and find perfection, and finally conjoin with the Source who created them.

As it happens, there are no licensing requirements to practice hypnosis in the United States at this time, so in 2007, I secluded myself in the fully stocked hypnosis and hypnotherapy section of the nearby university library and learned how this work was done. After several weeks of study, I offered my services to family and friends and put up a notice on the bulletin board of another college a little farther away. My services were offered free of charge and specialized exclusively in past life regression and LBL hypnosis. About twenty clients later, I had all the material I needed to confirm Weiss and Newton's work.

I spoke to the spirit guides of a number of clients who were capable of going into deep hypnosis. For those who have read neither Weiss nor Newton, I will explain in briefest outline the methodology of my own LBL sessions. They began with past life regression hypnosis and generally took two and sometimes three sessions to reach the realm of life-between-lives. Newton's approach was somewhat different and generally followed a marathon hypnosis session lasting from 4-6 hours. I didn't want to do that and usually confined my sessions to between 1 to 1½ hours, separated by a week or more.

In the first session, I found out if the individual was capable of deep hypnosis and comfortable with past life regression. I first hypnotized the client and moved them back to infancy, then back to a time before their birth. This was all done by a carefully worded script encouraging imagery and occasional verbal response from the subject once they showed signs of hypnotic trance. A place of safety was created in an imaginary garden to which the subject could return if there was too much stress and he or she was fearful of continuing. (Some past lives are *very* stressful, but usually the hypnotist can move beyond or around the most stressful moments without having to wake the subject.) When the subject relived a given past life and was guided to the end of that life, he or she was brought back to normal waking consciousness. And that was the end of the first session.

In the next session, I would again take the subject to a past life, preferably the most immediate past life (to help them address troubling issues that may be impinging on their current life), up to and *including* the death scene. When the death scene was fully relived, we next worked on coming to some understanding about that life's chief lesson. Every life has a principle lesson the incarnating individual was supposed to learn. Then, we went forward beyond that death. At this point, the subject was usually a bit disoriented, but invariably felt peace, even joy at having died. Occasionally, there was some residual angst about the nature of the death in the past life, but that was easily soothed away with a few kind words, and the time and distance traveled away from the body of that life and the earthly plane left the past life a dim memory.

Despite the peace and joy at having left the body behind, or perhaps because of it, the subject was not always focused or oriented enough to know where they were. If this was the case, I asked them to tell me how they felt and what they were thinking. (Hypnotic subjects, even in deep trance, are capable of talking while still hypnotized. This may come as a surprise to those unfamiliar with hypnosis, but it is common and can be done with the right words of hypnotic suggestion.) At this point, the goal was to find the subject's daimon, or spirit guide. I prefer the classical term made popular by Socrates and will use 'daimon' to describe the subject's spirit companion. Christians would call it a Guardian Angel.

Finding the daimon was seldom difficult to do, but usually required the suggestion that the subject look for a person or light that would never be far away. I explained that this was their daimon and would be their guide, and that I would simply stand by until the subject located him, her, or it, which rarely took more than a minute or two. When contact was made we had introductions all around, and I attempted to get the name and gender of the subject's daimon—if the gender wasn't immediately obvious. The daimon normally took a human form, or as a brightly lit spirit, and was only manifest as an animal on two occasions with boys, both too young to be useful for my study. After the introduction, I explained what we were doing, then gave the subject all the time s/he wished to converse silently with the daimon.

When they were finished, anywhere from 2-5 minutes, I asked the subject if s/he wished to tell me anything that was said. The conversation was invariably summarized as a happy reunion, and at that point the LBL session really began. I asked permission to speak directly to the daimon and record its answers. Permission was always given. These answers were always spoken *by* the subject—who did *not* speak in otherworldly voices. It was nearly always the same voice the hypnotized person used in waking consciousness, although I've had subjects who uncharacteristically spoke so rapidly it was difficult to follow what they were saying until I slowed them down. Otherwise, there was no change in either the tone or modulation of the voice. They were simply saying the words the daimon put into their minds. Very often, when subjects were brought out of hypnosis, they were quite surprised at the answers to my questions. The hypnosis was so deep and the subject as participant was so passive that s/he was only dimly aware of the information given. After each session we always had a review.

I was able to confirm Newton's conclusion that this work should not be done with the very young. He refused LBL hypnosis with anyone under the age of thirty. Newton said he believed it had to do with not learning enough about the lessons the incarnated spirit, the subject, is here to learn. The daimon of every person is quite careful to avoid answering questions about lessons that the individual has yet to experience. In other words, we are here on Earth to learn certain lessons

that cannot be understood by reading a book or being told the answer. They must be *experienced* to be learned. Commonly that experience is painful and difficult, but the individual only learns by going through it, and the daimon will not discuss these matters. They simply tell me they will not discuss that issue, but sometimes I'm able to get partial answers by asking if they could give the subjects a clue about how to best prepare themselves for the lesson at hand. The answer at this point is usually cryptic, such as pay more attention to your health or the bad company of so-and-so. That sort of thing.

For those who find LBL hypnosis interesting I'm going to disappoint you by not discussing any of my case histories. Instead, let me refer you to Weiss and Newton. I will mention a few matters in general. I can assure you that the answers to the big questions of life are often amazing! Profound. The subject later confesses to be as amazed by the words that came into his or her head as I am. Perhaps the most impressive part is that these answers often come immediately and are spoken so rapidly without any apparent effort or careful thought. The skeptical hypnotist can't help but think that if the subject is just making this all up then he or she must be a genius and at least a very deep thinker. None of the subjects hypnotized gave that appearance outside of deep hypnosis. None claimed backgrounds or interests in philosophy.

So, what is going on here? Well, one possibility is that there really are daimons assigned to each person on Earth, as the ancient Greeks claimed. You can further believe, if you want to, that there is some sort of spirit world beyond the grave to which we can communicate through hypnosis. On the other hand, you can refuse to be impressed by Weiss' case or Newton's 4000 cases, dismissing the lot as the anecdotal evidence of free-flowing imagination, or whatever. You can continue to steel yourself against hope and believe only in personal extinction at death, and no matter how amazing or astonishing the evidence, either in part or in accumulation, confine all of your thoughts to only those things that science has proven as fact. As you may have guessed, I personally believe that the latter point of view is bleak, rigid, and poverty-stricken. On the other hand, I am not ready to join a cult of spiritualists. There may be another possibility.

We have very little research on the power of the subconscious mind, but it's gradually getting the attention it deserves. In the December 2008 issue of *Current Biology*, a study done by an international team of brain researchers, including neuroscientist Beatrice de Gelder of Harvard, experimented with so-called blindsight. (Blindsight is the ability to "see" things by sensing them in the brain's subcortical and therefore subconscious visual system.) One patient, a medical doctor in his 50s, had recently suffered two strokes that left his visual lobes completely destroyed. His brain and eyes were in all other respects completely normal, leaving him with the equipment necessary to process subconscious vision. The doctor was skeptical and initially refused to take part in

the experiments. In the end, he was persuaded to zigzag down a hallway cluttered with a garbage can, a stack of papers, and several boxes, navigating the obstacles effortlessly.

There are those, especially hypnotists and hypnotherapists, who believe that our normal, waking conscious mind is, pardon the triteness, the tip of an iceberg. The subconscious, the subterranean consciousness is huge and largely unknown and ignored. What makes it so huge? There is very strong evidence that everything we ever see, hear, know, and experience is stored away in the subconscious. It is often recognized as the wellspring of great discoveries and creative genius. And still, we know so little about it. Everything in our culture is oriented to the conscious mind – all of life's punishments and rewards are focused on the tip of the iceberg, while the supporting structure is left alone.

The actual nature of the sub-consciousness may be the reason why a subject under the age of thirty is usually not advanced enough to be appropriate for LBL hypnosis. That is, the subconscious mind may simply not be developed enough to create an independent and alternate ego, which is exactly what I'm suggesting. A hypnotist in this kind of work may be tapping into a conversation with the subconscious mind. That mind may be a separate form of intelligence made up of all the individual has experienced in life and stored away out of sight and out of mind. Let's face it, 90% of it is of little or no known use in normal, daily survival. This would explain why the daimon believes it is a separate entity, because in a way it is. It would also explain why they are so eager to communicate, and they almost always are, about everything except life lessons that are yet to be learned. The reason they resist talking about these lessons may be because *they don't know* the answer – as in, the lesson has yet to be experienced and summarized. To suggest, however, that the subconscious has the ability to communicate in this manner implies that it is also a cognitive intelligence. How would you begin to measure that?

All speculation. That's metaphysics. These are difficult matters to study and know, and so we speculate. Do mystical experiences, near-death experiences, and communications with the spirit world offer authentic visions of invisible worlds beyond the grave? You must draw your own conclusions, but let me leave this chapter with one bit of advice I learned from the so-called spirit world. What I was told was spoken through the hypnotized subject directly to me for my benefit. One of seven elders in a Council of Elders, spirits more advanced than daimones or guides, said to me, "We understand that people are curious and want to know about life after death, and that is only natural, but isn't this work you are doing a little bit like cheating? [Pause] You are supposed to fully embrace your earthly existence and learn though that vehicle."

Then the Council of Elders simply vanished.

Psychological Crisis

As Director of the Stoic Registry I communicated by email with all the Stoics who joined and wanted to speak with another Stoic. We even started a group email association to plan on the future of Stoicism in the world. In January or early February of 2008 I had a conflict with a member of that Stoic community so intense and unpleasant that I went to bed one night fully expecting to discontinue all participation in Stoic matters beginning the following day. I was through. All of my work since founding the Stoic Registry in 1996 had caused nothing but hard work and no reward, either monetary or socially. So, I went to bed in disgust, intending to end my relationship with Stoics and Stoicism first thing in the morning.

The next morning at the earliest half-light it was raining hard, and I was awakened by a voice just outside my window. The voice was loud and strong and said, "Erik!" Erik!" I awoke with a start and looked out the window. Who the hell would be out there this time of day in a pouring rain loudly calling my name? There was no one. I sat on the bed and remembered where I was in my decision to leave the Stoic community. Suddenly it seemed entirely wrong and I knew exactly how I would bring an end to the unpleasantness of the previous days. That solution led directly to the idea of founding a school. The following July the College of Stoic Philosophers was born.

The Healing Chant

Every day at dawn, or a little before, I sing this chant. The words are Punjabi as written in the holy book of the Sikhs, *Guru Granth Sahib*. It is with the highest regard and respect for the chanting worship of the Sikhs that I have taken these words and the concepts that attend them for use in a daily chant I use to welcome and dedicate myself to the enlightenment of each day. This is my own personal arrangement of two mantras from the Sikh tradition.

According to the Sikhs, the mantra, *da ma ra sa*, taps into the energies of the Earth, Moon, Sun Impersonal Infinity to bring deep healing. I have personally benefited from a personal healing brought about by chanting this every day for several years. I hesitate to recommend it for any particular condition, because to this day I don't know if it was this chant or a case of mind-over-matter that healed me, but one day, after years of Lone Atrial Fibrillation (LAF).

This condition is characterized by the heart suddenly without warning beating so quickly, 180 beats per minute and more, until it no longer beats but only quivers.

When that happens you either find a place to sit down or lie down and wait for it to pass. This can be a few minutes or even longer. Sometimes it feels as if it will never end. When it does you're so exhausted and head achy it's impossible to get up and do anything because it could return with a vengeance. With the headache comes depression and a feeling of doom, and sometimes it can take hours, even a whole day, to recover.

In fact I retired early from my work as a Court Officer with the San Diego Probation Department. Every day when I went from my office in the Hall of Justice to the old court house I had to go down a flight of stairs to the Superior Court to which I was assigned. By the time I reached the bottom of the stairs I had to sit down or I would have fallen down. Fortunately there was a bench to sit at exactly at the bottom of the stairs.

Years earlier I had decided I would never complain at work and no one knew I was feeling this way because I said nothing to anyone except my wife. I had numerous tests by cardiologists and their technicians that confirmed my condition but there was nothing I could do about it because the LAF was centered on the wrong ventricle for surgery. I had quit all my bad habits—tobacco, alcohol, and coffee—one by one, and for a short time I would feel better, but not for long. I retired in 2004 at the age of 59, and that helped for a few months.

The LAF became so severe and frequent that I had become a semi invalid, confined to bed 2-3 times per week. This went on for years. Finally, I used the healing chant below with my hands over my heart for 22 minutes every morning, and after 9 or 10 months of chanting on a day in early December (I don't actually remember the year but probably 2008 or 2009) I decided I no longer needed to suffer from this condition. I further decided that I would no longer stop and sit or lie down when the LAF kicked in, I would continue doing what I was doing even if it killed me. I was simply not going to live as an invalid and I would rather die. From that day forward even though I waited for quite a while with anxious anticipation it never returned.

I began exercising again, lightly at first, then a few years later, in 2013 when I was 68 years old and feeling healthy and confident I climbed Mount Whitney, the highest mountain in the 48 contiguous States, and I climbed it in a single day. Before this chant, climbing even a single set of stairs was physically exhausting and invariably kicked off either a bad bout of arrhythmia or a full blown case of LAF. In 2014 I climbed Mount Olympus in Greece. In 2015, at the age of 70, I climbed Mount Fuji in Japan. The LAF has never returned.

[Note: The healing took place about 15-6 years before this current writing. Just a month ago a cardiologist said LAF was back, but it was only apparent in one ventricle, and it didn't beat fast it just quivered from time to time. I wasn't even aware of it.]

"Daa, Maa, Raa, Saa"

Daa (Earth)

Maa (Moon)

Raa (Sun)

Saa (Impersonal Infinity)

Ong Namō (I bow to the subtle divine wisdom)

Guru Dev Namō (I bow to the divine teacher within)

^^

The Four Great Treasures

[Excerpt from my Mount Fuji hiking journal: 22 JUN 15: Monday]

Right knee problem. I've been having this for several weeks, and it wasn't going away, so I took a whole week off: no climbing, no walking, just upper torso work. Today, I climbed the backside of Cowels. It was OK, about a 1 or 2 on a pain scale of 1 to 10, then 3/4th of the way up for some reason or no reason at all it jumped up to a 4. I toughed it out to the top, took a 5-minute break, then started back down. Jumped up to a 6, maybe a 7. Very painful. I'm limping and using my climbing poles more like crutches than walking sticks.

Stop for a breather at Thief's Junction—although I'm not at all out of breath, just giving the pain a few minutes rest. Start down the rest of the way. Before long the pain jumps up to a 7-8, and I'm just inching my way down. I'm wondering if I will ever make it down to the street where I parked my car. Then the pain gets so bad endorphins kick in, and I start to feel better all over. The knee pain goes back down to a 4, and I'm able to finish—25 minutes longer than my longest time. All of that was coming down hill so slowly I was barely moving at times.

Had a hard time driving home. Getting in and out of the car was murder. Called the doctor and made an appointment to have it looked at tomorrow.

There are four great treasures in life that makes it all worthwhile: beauty, truth, love, and endorphins. I used to think there was only three, but when you're in pain, the first three don't mean a thing. These four great treasures are all the evidence I need that Nature is benevolent.

I'll admit, the pain was so bad I was praying to my daimon, saying, "I really need some help here." I said it several times, and I really meant it, and that's when the endorphins kicked in. This was not imaginary; it was a real event. Believe me, when you're in a lot of pain, to have it suddenly reduce by half is quite amazing and clearly perceptible. **Here's the bottom line:** either my daimon answered my

request for help or the pain got bad enough for the endorphins to kick in without my request for help. That is, I requested help when my pain was bad enough to cause an endorphin flood all by itself. But, either way, I had a great experience. Either I saw first hand the benevolence of my daimon or of nature, or possibly of both.

I'm laying around the house this afternoon. As long as I don't move and keep my leg extended the pain is back to a 1 or 2, at least for awhile. If I get up or have to bend my knee at all it's a 3-4. I've taken Ibuprofen and some Chinese analgesics. Nothing. No obvious swelling, but I can't bend the knee without pain, so I'm would be basically immobile except that being in any position for more than a few minutes causes the pain to return more strongly. So, I have to keep changing position every 10-15 minutes.

Amielle and I made all our reservations for Japan and Mount Fuji yesterday.

Fate and the Podcast Year of Rejection

I normally don't keep a record of all the failures in my life but this one was so extraordinary I wrote down what I could remember of an extremely frustrating year of rejection when asking for help to set a podcast dealing with the subject of metaphysics. I had already written 7 or 8 episodes and was very excited about getting started. But, as usual, knowing computer technology was a weakness that had to be overcome with assistance from one whose brains work that way. And, I was willing to pay. The rejections listed are not all I encountered, they were the ones I could remember a year later. The names have been changed to protect privacy.

December 2021: Asked my old standby computer guy if we could figure out how to create a podcast together. No. Just. no.

January 2022: A computer tech for the Stoic Registry said he had created a podcast. After Zoom with him about how to do it. He said he didn't have time.

February: Donald S., our hired computer engineer help when we are in trouble, had no interest in pursuing the podcast—even at \$80/hour.

April: Offered a computer whiz \$400 for one day's work if he would come by our house for one day and help me set the podcast up
No.

May: Amielle's colleague has a friend who has a podcast and said she would ask—but didn't.

June: Took an online podcast DIY course and understood everything but the tech part.

July: Made appointment with Richard, a neighbor who is a professional media engineer and knows what is needed but was uncomfortably reluctant to proceed.

August: Another neighbor, an IT employee for a local company agreed to work with me. We spent a couple of hours on my computer doing everything but the podcast. A few days later, I went out to speak with him while he was sitting in his car drinking a coffee and texting. I waited and waited for him to finish texting so I could speak to him but he refused to look at me.

September: 2 emails to instructors at SD City College Film Dept asking if they had any students who may be interested for a class project for \$35/hr. One answered and said he would ask; the other didn't respond. Nothing.

October: Amielle contacted old colleague of ABC TV who said he wanted to help. We bought his dinner, and he had a lot of unneeded and unwanted ideas about content, but knew nothing about tech.

John and Kristen, neighbors. John had a computer start up in Seattle, made a lot of money, moved to San Diego a couple of years ago, and bought one of the nicer houses in the hood. He said his wife Kristen had a podcast and would get in touch with me. Waited 2 weeks, nothing, so I confronted them while out walking past our house. Christine said she would send me some material on getting started but never did.

November: James and Mary are old friends, he is a computer engineer, invited them over for dinner. Knew nothing about podcasts and had no interest in helping.

Our house cleaner's niece was helping her for the day. The niece was starting her first year as a computer tech student at a local college said she would do it after I offered \$30/hr. Several days later, when I tried to contact her at the phone number she gave me she repeatedly refused to answer.

Email contact of Boyd Hill, a former TV colleague of Amielle who has his own media business. No response to my inquiry for 2 weeks.

December: Neighbor Richard again. Emailed him with new info explaining exactly what I needed and asked if we could meet for coffee. No response.

Ben Campbell, friend of one of Amielle's colleagues, called him at end of month. Sounded interested. We made appointment for early January at his studio. He's a professional voice actor. We'll see if it happens.

January 2023: Went to Ben's studio in Mission Valley on January 4th. Yes. He charges \$150/hour, but will reduce his usual fee for a good cause. And, he will come to the house to get me set up here. Weeks later, Bill is not responding to my emails. Am I being ghosted? Why?

Personal Computer is even slower than before. Impossibly slow ever since I put in Windows 11, but it was always ridiculously slow. Looking for a new computer. I've run out of ideas for getting help with the podcast.

A Change of Fate

I simply had no idea how I could proceed with creating a podcast. I had purchased special headphones, microphone, everything I need to start except help on the technical recording and publishing aspect. I had asked everyone I knew, everyone Amielle knew, and numerous people I didn't know. Nothing. I had some great scripts for the podcast but couldn't use them. Or could I? At that point I decided to create a journal of Stoic metaphysics. I knew how to create online journals; I had done it twice before, but now I needed to create subscribers. I simply went through my contact list and made a list of 43 people I knew who I thought may be interested in such a journal.

In two weeks I had created the journal and sent it out to the surprised subscribers. (None of them ever canceled their subscription.) It was a monthly journal that went for 15 issues, concluding with the March/April 2024 issue and the realization that I needed to create a college of metaphysics to continue in the my investigations. By the end of May, the College of Posidonius was born, and on June first, the college opened with its first students—readers of my journal.

Chuckling: A Meditation to Feel the Divine Within

[Written in January 2025 for students of the College of Posidonius] Chuckling is commonly thought to be a gentle and quiet form of laughter, the opposite of a loud and boisterous belly laugh. That's why it is such a good word to describe a form of meditation that combines two ancient practices into one: chanting and shuckling. Chanting while shuckling is what I call Chuckling Meditation. We all know about the spiritual value of chanting, but for those unfamiliar shuckling the following is a brief introduction to that practice.

According to an AI overview, "Shuckling is a Jewish practice of swaying back and forth while praying or studying. The word comes from Yiddish and means 'to shake'." Unless you have seen rabbinical students studying the Torah your most common view of this practice is probably images of Orthodox Jews shuckling at the Western or "Wailing" Wall of the Temple of Jerusalem destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. If you are unfamiliar with that images there are many YouTube videos of this practice. Here's one:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/CYSyNsBBKuA>

Basically, it is a movement from the waist swaying from side to side or forward and back. "This practice can be traced back to at least the 8th century, and possibly as far back as Talmudic times (Wikipedia)." The forward and back movement is the one most commonly seen and the one I have always used in Chuckling Meditation (CM).

The Benefit of Chuckling

Why would anyone chant and shuckle? To answer that question involves another term, a Sanskrit word used by Paramhansa Yogananda to describe a feeling of bliss or divine joy: *ananda*. According to the Yogic Encyclopedia, "In Yoga philosophy it is said that God is sat-chit-ananda," which translates to existence-consciousness-bliss.

A Yoga master will tell you that you can *only* experience ananda while in deep meditation, and only under the tutelage of a Yoga master. This is a self-serving half truth. It *is* experienced in deep meditation, but you can also experience ananda in CM. I have experienced ananda at least a hundred times in deep meditation and in CM. Here is my personal history with that phenomenon.

The first time I experienced ananda I had no idea what it was or that it had been experienced by yogis for centuries. For those who have read *A Monastery of One*

(MOO) you may recall that my first mystical insight occurred on 16 JUN 03. I called it "Empty Sky" because I didn't know what to call the feeling I had when my body emerged from the the "Great Sea," the material world, into an empty sky of pure bliss.

You may also recall that there were years of meditation when I had no mystical insights at all but was encouraged to continue meditating because I experienced this feeling of bliss repeatedly. Years after my first ananda experience I discovered what it was called when I looked for it on the Internet. I didn't have a master who could tell me what it was that I had discovered.

Then the feeling of ananda stopped. In fact, without it I had great difficulty continuing my meditation practice, so I stopped. Several months later I discovered shamanic journeying, and I didn't need to meditate because I was so busy with journeying that I completely lost interest in the whole ananda thing. Even so, I continued to chant in my morning meditations until several years ago when I discovered shuckling. I remember reading a comment by one rabbi who said she didn't meditate but thought shuckling would probably enhance the meditation experience. So I tried it—when I chanted.

And when I did, Ananda returned for the first time in years. I stood while I chanted and shuckled and after experimenting with different lengths of time I discovered that with about 15 minutes of CM I was flooded with ananda bliss as soon as I sat down. I knew it was ananda because it was the same feeling I had in my first mystical insight and the feeling had so many times in deep meditation. But now I could experience it after only 15 minutes of CM.

There may be a physiological reason for this. Yvonne Kason, a medical doctor practicing in Toronto, Canada, had a near-death experience so profound and shocking that she devoted years of her life studying what it could be.² With a strict scientific background she actually had no knowledge of the NDE phenomenon until it happened to her. Her research into Kundalini along with her knowledge of the physiology of the spine led her to believe that various ways of stimulation can cause mystical feeling to be physiologically based.

After reading her book it occurred to me CM may encourage the ananda experience with this movement in a Kundalini way by stimulating the spine from the base up to the brain. I don't know. If her theory is correct, it may be that I am able experience Ananda because I have so many years of meditation experience with it. According to her theory even religious studies can add to that Kundalini stimulation. I don't know if CM will lead a new meditator to the ananda experience, because until this writing I have only taught this method to one other

² Yvonne Kason, M.D., *Farther Shores: Exploring how Near-Death, Kundalini and Mystical Experiences can Transform Ordinary Lives* (iUniverse, 2008)

person. In his case I discovered he was doing it wrong and didn't want to correct his practice and continue. I don't know if one who is inexperienced can just jump right to feeling ananda, or if they must have already experienced it in deep meditation.

What I do

Another odd and unknown thing about CM is that I have only done it with one chant, "Sapere Aude." I don't know if it only works with one chant or if the words mean anything at all. Maybe one could create a chant stringing together a chain of nonsense syllables and it would work just as well. In addition it should be pointed out that the feeling is never exactly the same. Sometimes it's strong and sometimes it's barely there. I did it just a few days ago while I was still recovering from two weeks of Covid-19 sickness, and the ananda feeling was so strong it was almost overwhelming!

What does it feel like. It's difficult to describe because the bliss of ananda, the God feeling, is not a common experience in life. It's not same as the joy of dancing or great music or sexual ecstasy. It feels a little like being drunk without the murkiness of being drunk. I was surprised when I read that Sufis describe their ecstasy as being drunk on God. Are they experiencing ananda? Maybe, but I'm not a Sufis so it's difficult for me to know if we are feeling the same thing. I suspect that it is the same, and it could be that the Sufi Whirling Dervishes are feeling ananda while they whirl. Take a look at this video on YouTube: "Sufi Whirling Dervishes of Konya - ritual dance, Turkey".

What I do is chant in Latin and shuckle for *about* 15 minutes. I used to time it but I don't do that anymore; I just follow my intuition to know when I can stop CM and sit down. The words of the chant, "Sapere Aude," are sung in a monotone at whatever pitch is comfortable at that time of day—usually about 5 AM. The chant itself is based upon two sources, an old Roman saying, "Aquila non caput muscus" (the eagle doesn't catch flies); and, the title of Emmanuel Kant's essay on mysticism, "Sapere Aude" (dare to be wise).

That's it. I chant Aquila non caput muscus 3 times, then Sapere aude twice. That's one verse, which I repeat over and over, bowing forward and back in time to the sound and rhythm of the words. To the uninitiated it probably looks quite strange. Shuckling looks strange, but not as strange as whirling like a Dervish. And, at this time I only do it alone by myself. I've never done it in front of another person, not even my wife, but I may someday.

Belief

Several years ago I was confronted with the prospect of trying to explain my creation of a Stoic monastery to a couple of individuals who were highly skeptical and very intelligent professors who lived in New York City. I cast about hither and thither searching for some way to make my commitment to a spiritual way of life sound sane if not reasonable to them. I was at a loss, and at such times, only when I cannot find an answer on my own, I still occasionally make a shamanic journey to find the answer.

I don't do this often, and I rarely have any of the visual storytelling aspects of the journeys anymore. It may be that those days are over, they served their purpose, and now I see only darkness. But, I am still able to find answers to difficult questions. This was one of those times. When I explained my situation to my daimon Kwafumi, there was a pause, then the name, "William James" came to mind. I gave my thanks, left my monastery room and searched Project Gutenberg on the Internet for books or article they had freely available in the public domain. I knew enough about William James to know he was an 19th century American Pragmatist, and not much more.

Being in something of a hurry for the answer I read the shortest article I could find, and discovered one of the greatest lectures I have ever read—not because it's easy but because it has become a kind of cornerstone upon which I built my foundation for belief ever since. "The Will to Believe"³ is an essential work for those who are by nature skeptical of any belief but intuitively know that Nihilism is not the answer. (After it's publication, James confided that it should have been entitled, "The *Right* to Believe.") At the risk of annoying any William James fans out there I will attempt to summarize his lecture as briefly as I can.

The essential points William James makes begins with three criteria in making a genuine choice. The choice must be:

1. LIVE, in that it has some internal, subjective emotive appeal, not necessarily rational. A "dead" choice would be a matter that has no internal, subjective appeal at all.
2. FORCED, in that you are confronted by an either-or situation, not multiple choice. If you choose one you must necessarily go without the other. In a multiple choice situation you are not forced to make a decision, because you can choose other options or none at all.
3. MOMENTOUS, in that it isn't a trivial matter. It is momentous in that what you choose is a once in a lifetime opportunity or situation and that it matters a great deal to you.

-137-

³ William James, "The Will to Believe," An Address to the Philosophical Clubs of Yale and Brown Universities. Published in the *New World*, June, 1896.

James's thesis is that when we cannot make a decision on the basis of the intellect, the rational mind, then we not only may, but we necessarily *must* make the decision based on the internal feeling of what is right. Refusing to make a decision, according to James, doesn't solve the problem; it is in itself a "passional" decision. He goes on to point out that although we are born with absolutist tendencies, we must always search for the truth. We must search for truth even as we know there are no concrete tests for the truth, that truth constantly changes, and that there is really only *one truth*, "...the present phenomenon of consciousness exists."⁴ Nothing more.

James goes on to say that we have the right to believe any hypothesis that is "alive" to us (see the above criteria of choice). In making momentous choices, those who are afraid of looking foolish by making the "wrong" choice or waiting for scientific certainty will live with *nothing*. We are showing gratitude to our god, who or whatever it is, by earnestly believing, even if faith is required. *Faith creates facts*. It is with faith that we embark on any enterprise. This idea is important enough to quote James directly:

"Whenever a desired result is achieved by the cooperation of many independent persons, its existence as a fact is a pure consequence of the precursive faith in one another of those immediately concerned. A government, an army, a commercial system, a ship, a college, an athletic team, all exist on this condition, without which not only is nothing achieved, but nothing is even attempted."

Authority

Finally, it is important that we come to an understanding about another part of belief. What right have I to expect you to believe in these events and experiences that I am about to describe? None. You don't have to believe them. Even if they are "live" to you and have some "internal, subjective emotive appeal, not necessarily rational," I'm not asking you to believe in their truth and I'm not asking you to believe in my authority. In another work by James⁵ he says that mystical states may rightly be authoritative to the individual who has them, but those outside of these states have no obligation to accept them uncritically. They show that there are more kinds of truth than is perceived by the rational consciousness of the senses alone.

If strange dreams, mystical experiences, shamanic journeys, animal messengers, and spirit drawings do not have the authority to require our belief, what do they offer us? "Hypotheses which we may voluntarily ignore, but which as thinkers we

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Based upon William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* from his appointment as Gifford Lecturer on Natural Religion at the University of Edinburgh (1901-2), Lecture 17

cannot possibly upset.”⁶ They also offer you a front row seat in the drama of one man's inner life. They can be analyzed and taken apart piece by piece, or they can be viewed intuitively as a blossoming whole. Each of us has the ability to see such things both ways, and I welcome you to the show.

Everything I have learned from a lifetime of otherworldly experiences and contacts has been dug up and laid bare as raw material upon which the cosmology of this world and the next can be derived and codified. But is it true? Yes. It truly happened, and at the time it happened it was profoundly true to me. It is true in the empirically verified process of using information from these various explorations, observations, and direct experiences to form a vision and version of reality that I personally know.

But the question remains, as it always will, is the source of these manifestations and descriptions of the way things really are an external and reliable source upon which to build a hypothesis? Is it an external entity or entities that really know the cosmos as it is; or, is it the product of one generously bountiful subconscious mind? A very good question indeed. Sometimes it appears to be one and sometimes it appears to be another. But most importantly for your purposes and mine, does this cosmos seem reasonable and does it stand the test of time? Only you can answer the former question, and only the future can answer the latter.

It seems reasonable to me. And it should be remembered that the cosmos you found here is only a world that can be comprehended and examined today. One thousand years from now, it's hard to imagine the AI androids that occupy and dominate our world will see things the way we do now. And even if they don't control human beings and have the power to take away our privileges, we will still be so advanced in information that we will likely operate with an entirely different reality paradigm. And, even if we humans manage to destroy the AI experiment and grind it into extinction, we will still be different people than we are today. What did humans think about the cosmos 1000 years ago. Would they even be capable of comprehending the reality we know today? Of course not. Everyone lived in Plato's cave back then.

And if you are disappointed in not having something permanent to believe about the cosmos, something you can point to with confidence and conviction just as the fundamentalist does with their religion, then I'm sorry to tell you that change is the only constant, and those clerics who tell you their way is the only way and that it is always that way everlasting are simply liars and/or fools. What they pretend to believe or really believe is as antiquated as knowing with absolute certainty that the world is flat.

As mentioned earlier, William James pointed out that although we are born with such absolutist tendencies, we must always search for the truth. We must search for truth even as we know there are no concrete tests for the truth, that truth

⁶ Ibid

constantly changes, and that there is really only *one truth*, "...the present phenomenon of consciousness exists."⁷ Nothing more. But if the certainty of fundamentalists and zealots is what you really wanted, then this book probably didn't give you what you sought. In my cosmos, you are allowed to doubt and change is the only constant. I continue to search for truth even as I know it will only be found the day after I die. Good luck⁸ to you, and maybe we will meet each other on the path.

^^^

⁷ ibid

⁸ This expression is but a colloquial version of the Stoic's good emotion of well-wishing.