

# IMAGINE THAT

*Integrating Realities In Search of Actuality-  
One Initiate's Journey*

Michael Guarino

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# PREFACE

## Who Am I

There was a diversity program that I facilitated years ago that began with an activity that asked people to orient themselves based upon who they aspired to be as a child. It was always surprising for people to see themselves from this perspective, and it was equally surprising for me personally. My aspirations as a child where to become a priest and an artist.

It is interesting to compare what I became, and what I am becoming, with those early childhood aspirations. Like all children, I had psychic experiences that transcended the boundaries of time and space. I was raised Catholic, and learned early on that these were not things to be talked about. In addition, there was a fairy tale aspect to the explanation of the cosmos that became more and more unbelievable as I grew older. What finally quelled my aspiration to become a priest was the emphasis on sin, and good versus evil. When I think back on my childhood aspiration, what I was really looking for was spiritual truth. My spiritual curiosity motivated me to experiment and explore psychic phenomenon from a very young age. Much of my journey was about reading and study, until I discovered the Rosicrucian Order. The Rosicrucian Order added an element of experiment and initiation to my journey.

I never became an artist either, not in a conventional sense. However, I had an urgent need to be creative in everything I did. Throughout my education and career I had to be in an environment that valued creativity and self expression. Imagination has always been an invitation to expand beyond perceptually based realities to actualities, to what really is. I learned early on that imagination brings with it a mental alchemy, and a different level of understanding.

Most of my career was in education, training and human resources. Creating programs and teaching gave way to facilitation, and facilitation morphed into counseling, change management, career development, and eventually succession planning. I left the corporate world to pursue a study of Psychology, then interned and worked briefly in behavior management.

Although the focus was illness and disability, I discovered early on that an individual's spiritual heritage has a great deal to do with their lot in life, and that in fact their illness or disability was actually the gateway to greater capability. I am and have always been interested in capability, in the positive aspects of who we are and who we aspire to become.

Who am I now? I am simply an initiate on the path who would like to share his journey.

### About This Book

Early in my pursuit of spiritual knowledge I began to keep a journal. The journal contained recollections of dreams, psychic experiences and meditations.

The intent of the journal was to be able to look back and reflect upon the meaning of prior experiences as new experiences continued to happen. I came to realize that over time the meaning that I attached to an experience changed, along with some of my core beliefs. Once I became conscious of this, I was inspired to review my range of belief, what I had come to know, what I was still questioning, and to look at my journal from a topical rather than a chronological perspective. I moved the contents of the journal into the following clusters: the nature of being, energy, consciousness, the nature of behavior, karma, personality, and the nature of knowledge. Although I found it difficult to categorize some aspects of my journal in this way, I surrendered to the idea. What evolved was a new type of journal.

The new journal became one that was not bound by time, as I came to realize that some experiences were a continuation or a repeat of one that happened earlier. I also came to realize that psychic experiences have little meaning if they are divided into past, present or even future events. Any truth in psychic experience can only be comprehended from a 'now' perspective of time. This idea became an invitation to construct my journal experience in all time, combining elements of my past with aspirations of the present and the future. I gave myself permission to re-experience prior experience, and at the same time to expand the experience from new or different perspectives.

The driving force behind all of this was to examine my beliefs, what I had come to know as true. What evolved was a personal creed for each of the topical clusters that I created. The creation of these creeds allowed me to challenge and let go of old beliefs, and to accept new ones.

### Approach

I am who I was who I am who I will be. I came to realize this truth as I meandered on the spiritual path, and as I moved through my career. We all wear many hats and use many lenses based upon where we have been, and where we want to go. My hats and lenses include Teacher, Counselor, Manager, Artist, and Facilitator. Each hat and lens has a different orientation for getting at truth.

The approach used in this book is somewhat unusual as it represents my unique hats and lenses, and my preferred methods of getting at truth. They include poetry, stories, experiments or activities, and essays.

The poetry in this book is an expression of 'quick hit' understanding.

The stories in this book are about reflection and discovery, and are written mostly in the form of dialogues. Many of the stories are attempts to recreate an experience; be it a dream, a meditation, a psychic experience, or something in between. The process of writing down these experiences encouraged me to think about them in a different way, and the experience itself influenced my dreams and meditation periods. When I found myself questioning what happens after death, questioning spiritual ideas and principles that I have studied, a variety of characters and animations would come forward to facilitate my learning and understanding. For the most part they are people that I came to know and trust. Many of the characters are animations of the people in my life. They include my seventh grade English teacher, a priest and professor I met in graduate school, and numerous friends and colleagues. Other characters are different aspects of my personality in this life; me at fifteen, thirty five or fifty; while others are me in another incarnation. From one perspective none of these characters are real, and from another perspective they are all real in that they are extensions of my reality. I prefer

to think of the experience as shared identity, shared being, a process and journey that leads to actuality.

Many of the stories have experiments or activities built into them, but I also included experiments and activities as separate documents in the book. The experiments and activities come from the teacher and facilitator in me, as I have come to realize that true learning comes from experience. The essays summarize my current understanding of a particular topic.

### My Mentors

The most important mentors in my life are people I never met in the physical world. They are people that I know about from reading and study. I imagine them in my dreams and meditations and petition them with questions. The answers always come, but sometimes in unexpected and subconscious ways. Below are three people who have significantly influenced my spiritual development, my thinking, and my behavior.

#### Edward Carpenter 1844 – 1929

Edward Carpenter was an author, social reformer, gay activist and mystic whom I discovered in my teens. I did not know about his mystical work until my mid thirties, at which point I realized that my discovery of his work was not coincidental. He has been a great inspiration all my life, and each of his books fell into my hands at the appropriate time of my development.

All of Edward Carpenter's books are out of print, but many of them can be found in used book stores and on line. Books that had a significant influence on my development include: *The Drama of Love & Death*, *Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folk*, *My Days & Dreams*, *A Visit to Gnai*, *The Art of Creation and Toward Democracy*.

#### H Spencer Lewis 1883 – 1939

I was introduced to the teachings of H Spencer Lewis when I joined the Rosicrucian Order. Harvey Spencer Lewis was the founder of the Rosicrucian Order in the USA, and was the first Imperator of the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) from

1915 until 1939. He is one of the key authors of the Rosicrucian monographs and teachings, which are only available to members of the Rosicrucian Order. (*For information about the Rosicrucian Order, visit WWW.AMORC.ORG*)

Books that had a significant influence on my development, that are also available to the general public include: *Mansions of the Soul*, *Mental Alchemy*, *Self Mastery & Fate with the Cycles of Life*, *Essays of a Modern Mystic*, and *The Conscious Interlude*

#### William Walker Atkinson (Yogi Ramacharaka) 1862 - 1932

I have odd memories of this name being whispered to me in my teens and twenties. In my dreams I would see this name in a book, but afterward I could not consciously spell it or write it down. There has always been an attraction and repulsion at the same time. His books invited challenge for me. They would stir me up, sometimes make me angry, and yet they always inspired and gave me permission to think and transcend to my own realm of understanding.

Books that had a significant influence on my development under the name William Walker Atkinson include: *The Mastery of Being*, *Dynamic Thought or the Law of Vibrant Energy*, *Thought Vibration or the Law of Attraction in the Thought World*. Several books were written under the same Yogi Ramacharaka, including *The Life Beyond Death*, which continues to have a powerful effect on me.

### Intention

My intention in sharing this book is to share my journey. I ask that you reflect on your journey as you read it, and invite you to challenge my personal creeds and create your own.

Cluster 1:

*I Am More than I*

## SUMMARY OF CLUSTER 1: I AM MORE THAN I

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Loosing self identity in a dream, and trying on aspects of identity of those that are loved and admired.	
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there's me the physical body  
a being with five sense perception,  
organs and blood,  
muscles and tissues,  
skin and bone,  
brain and cognition

there's me the soul  
an individual personality  
and a connection to all

personal and impersonal  
collected and uncollected  
all at the same time

there's me the body of light  
born from aspects of soul  
an energetic body  
with numerous centers of colored light

pumping the blood,  
controlling the heartbeat,  
offering psychic perception to bridge  
an imagined distance between self and all



## ALL THAT YOU CAN BE

The ocean was cool but the swim was refreshing. I lie in the hot sun with my eyes closed and allow swirls of color to form, blend and dissipate. A whiteness bursts from the center of this collage, and drifts like a cloud. It sails above the waves of color, and then descends through them. The white cloud disappears and reappears, changing shape as it moves within and between the colors. I study it and it takes on the characteristics of a human face. It looks as though it is about to speak. The mouth opens, and then closes without making a sound.

I project a thought to the cloud and words seem to resonate from the center of my head. "You can talk to me."

The cloud zooms in and I can see the features of the face. It's a man with pronounced dimples and a mustache. His eyes are deep pockets. The face is not contained by a head. Instead it floats in whiteness, surrounded by swirling hues of deep blue, sky blue, violet and purple.

"Tell me about the puppy."

"Oh," I was startled and blinked. The clouds of color darkened and shifted but the face was still there.

"He thinks he is part of you, doesn't he?"

"Of course," I could feel myself wearing a shrug. "I don't think animals have a sense of self identity. They just are, and everything around them is part of them."

"And you, you have knowledge that you are separate from other beings?"

"Yes," I admitted matter of factly, "But I also have a sense of oneness within me. I am one but I am connected."

"So how would you describe being?"

“Being is all. Nothing can be separate from being.”

“So self is an illusion?” My face took on an expression of my father when he was skeptical about something I said.

“Of sorts,” I took in a deep breath of air. “But I would rather think of it as a misperception, a misunderstanding.”

“Being is life, being is animated,” the face was consumed by a broad smile. “Being is soul energy.”

“And what is mind?”

“Mind is an attribute of being. Thought is an attribute of mind.”

“And what is thought?”

“Thought is energy.”

As I lie there in the sun the jingle from a commercial rattled in my head. “Be, all that you can be...”

“You can be all,” the faced laughed.

The laughter startled me and then I found comfort in it. “Well that positive attitude really makes all the difference.”

“I’m not talking attitude,” the face took on a darker hue until a cloud passed. “I’m talking literally,” the faced brightened as the sun returned. “Seriously, you have the capacity to be all. Technically it’s not just capacity, all is already there inside you.”

“I get lost in that,” I admitted. “As a kid it scared me.”

“What scared you?”

“Well,” I hesitated to even think it. “It became the inverse. When I experienced all it registered as nothing.”

“And when did you ring that cash register?”

“Well actually it was after the experience,”

“Of course!” The face laughed again. “The self has a hard time understanding experiences that are not sense based. We tend to rationalize, and by relating the experience to anything we have known or learned about.”

All of a sudden the moving wave of color was stationary and my friend’s head moved up and down, and then left to right. In an instant it was stationary again and it zoomed in to consume all my conscious perception.

“So you felt dead?” The eyes were all I could see and the question was formed with a sort of telepathic empathy rather than words.

“Beyond dead,” I could feel my eyes tearing.

“What does that mean?” The faced shifted and all I could see was his mouth. It was slightly open with a look of concern.

“Well I remember being in that in between state, you know, like I was outside myself. And when I realized that I wasn’t I, I realized I wasn’t anyone else either. I was no one.”

“So you moved from self to all to nada.” The face zoomed in and I could see it clearly. The dimples deepened as the smile ascended.

“I did,” I felt myself nodding. “And you are right, that nada feeling was a product of rationalization.”

“So let’s be rational for a moment. You said earlier that being is all. If being is all, how can there be nothing?”

“There can’t be a little pocket or void someplace?” I asked coyly knowing that logically it wasn’t possible.

The head turned a little and the mouth closed tightly. I sensed a swallow. “Go ahead.”

“We talked about thought earlier. Thought creates reality, correct?”

The head nodded. “Then in my thinking I could imagine nada, imagine that nothing state.”

“That’s true, you could.”

“Then for me, it is real.”

“It is real but it isn’t truth.” The face zoomed out so far I could barely see it in the swirls of color.

“It doesn’t matter whether it’s true or not, it’s real.” I could feel the skin on my face tighten as I swallowed. “Truth is not relevant in an emotional state.”

“But erroneous thinking and false rationalization brought you to that emotional state.” The small face drifted from left to right in the upper portion of the swirling color. “So rationalization can take you out of that emotional state if you, um.” There was a pause and then the face was large again. “If you get annoyed with the feeling and want to be done with it.”

“So reality can have a time span. If I let go of a belief the reality dissipates.”

“You know that time is man made.”

“I’ve read that. I don’t personally know it to be true. I’ve also read that space is man made too.”

“Let’s think rationally again for a moment. If being is all, then any concept of separateness cannot be true. There can be no space and no sequence of events. Time and space are illusions created by man. They depend upon the relationship of our consciousness to others. When we transcend from self to all those relationships vanish and there is no longer a need for time and space.”

“A constant state of now, I can’t imagine it.”

“Allow yourself to imagine it, and it will be.”

Clouds drifted by and darkened the face. “Imagination is such a powerful tool. It’s that critical first step in mental creating.”

“Not to dwell on the nada, but there is something there that you are not telling me.”

“Well,” I hesitated. “I mentioned emotion. Emotion leads me to irrational conclusions.”

“They can also override what may seem rational and help you find truth.”

“Again the inverse.” I sensed a smirk on my part.

“What was the feeling? What was the emotion that you didn’t tell me about?”

“Guilt,” I swallowed. “Sometimes I don’t feel worthy.”

“And sometimes you are not,” a profound laugh emerged from the smile. It was loud and deep and I sensed that it was not intended as a judgment or insult.

“A feeling of guilt is an opportunity to evaluate your behavior, unless you are insinuating that the guilt you were feeling was core to your being.”

“Oh no it wasn’t that,” I searched for communication in his eyes. I needed to feel that empathy. “Wait,” I paused for a moment. “I have to comment on

the guilt. It came from the gay part of who I am. I've learned a great deal about self confidence and self esteem based on that aspect of my identity. The experience was a gift and a difficult one."

"What aspect of it was difficult?"

"Well at the core it is about being different, and that is difficult because all of us like to feel included and respected. I mean if you are a kid and a minority, you can always go home and be with family who are just like you. A gay kid is alone."

"Guilt inspires you to search your heart, and you did a lot of searching over the years and managed to overcome those feelings of guilt about being gay." There was silence for a moment and the color red was predominant. "Search your heart for any aspect of guilt that comes to you. Evaluate your intention and your behavior." The color dissipated and all I could see were his green eyes. They provided all the empathy I needed. "Consider whether or not something you did or are doing hurts someone else, and whether or not it violates your personal ethics."

"And if it doesn't?"

"Then you simply didn't meet someone's expectations, or perhaps you didn't follow their rules." The head yawned in a way that suggested self acceptance and peace, and then the face took on a serious expression. "You have learned to be courageous and stand alone, and that is an integral part of your ongoing journey."

"When I stand alone I give myself permission to be or at least experience more than this self."

"And open your heart," the eyes were electric and seemed to consume me. "To understand being and become all that can be."

i am

you are not me  
only i am me

sometimes  
without  
saying  
a word  
you affect me

i feel wired,  
anxious

worthy

loved

a psychic you

you can help me  
we can reach out  
we can help each other understand

and together journey to the All

*i am too*

*you are you  
and only you*

*you affect me too*

*curious*

*determined*

*a psychic you too*

## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Although I was in the nursing home I was really in her head, and she was getting ready for some event and baking chocolate cake. As I sat the chair became more uncomfortable and the pleasant aroma of baking cake mingled with the unpleasant stench of the nursing home until I was fully sober. Her mouth hung open and her lips were parched. A nurse came over to wet her lips and close her eyes, then looked at a chart which indicated that it was time to move her to another position. She groaned briefly with eyes wide open in my direction, then quickly fell asleep.

“You don’t have to physically be here,” I told myself as I squirmed in the chair. “You are here in dream time more than you consciously remember.”

“It’s true,” another voice clicked in my head. “Still there is nothing quiet like physical presence, and these weekly ten minute visits have value.”

I stood up to leave and my mother’s eyes opened. I gave her a little wave as I slowly exited the room. My eyes closed briefly as I stood in silence for a second and projected a thought. “Bake cake. Be happy. Everyone likes your cake.”

“You never cared for cake,” a young man in a scraggily beard sat across from me in a place that looked like a Starbucks.

“I liked white cake, angel food with a coconut frosting.” The man looked familiar but I could not place him. The coffee house was dim and it was difficult to find his eyes. When I found them I saw my mother’s eyes and I knew I was dreaming. “Who do you think you are?” I rubbed my chin with a thumb and forefinger.

He laughed like an adolescent boy, and his hand movements had a feminine quality. “That is what your mother use to ask you when you did something she didn’t approve.”

“Sometimes it wasn’t a matter of approval,” my eyebrows rose. “My behavior, or rather my expressed hopes and dreams, sometimes indicated that I was becoming someone other than she expected.”

“Identity is queer,” he laughed again. “And ultimately an illusion,” he slumped back in the chair. “I mean you are who you are, but yet you are always becoming someone else.”

“And sometimes you are who you are not, even though it may only be a for split second.”

“Like you walking down the hall to a conference room and suddenly becoming the person you will be confronting at the opposite end of the table.”

“Oh that dizzy feeling, I hated it. For a split second I didn’t know who I was, and then I would get scared and my heart would race and feel like it was going to burst from my chest.”

“You always came back,” the young man yawned apathetically. “You may think those experiences just happened to you, but you brought them on.”

“It was never intentional; I mean I was never in control.”

“Oh bull,” he paused briefly. “That’s like being drawn to read a sad story, then finding yourself in tears and wondering why you are crying.” He cracked his knuckles. “Sometimes we are intentional, but cannot get to the core of our intention.”

“The outcome of intentions easily get morphed because it is not just me who has intentions.”

“That is very true,” he rubbed his chin. “But in your mother’s case that is not so. You projected thoughts of love and peace to her, and then helped her.” He cocked his head to one side. “Give yourself credit for that.”

“Sometimes she would shock me.”

“In what way?”

“I would hear her voice calling me. It was a soft questioning voice, a lost voice looking for clarity and conformation.” I scratched my head. “She would call my name as though questioning if I were there.”

“Did she ever ask you who you think you are when in that state?”

“She did,” I nodded. “It promoted a lot of thought for me, and not just in terms of my mother and her asking me that question when I was a kid. People who know you well challenge you when you do or say something that seems out of character.”

“Just like you challenge them,” he shrugged. “Says a lot about identity doesn’t it?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well we blend into one another. Sometimes we give in to who another person thinks we should be.”

“And that can be a good thing,” I leaned forward and then all the way back in the chair.

“Influence,” the young man cocked his head to one side and paused in reflection. “Plays a tremendous role in expanding beyond self.”

“It doesn’t happen without trust.”

“Hmm,” he hesitated. “Without love is probably more accurate.” He found my eyes and startled me with a penetrating stare. “That is what assumption is all about, true?”

“How do you know about that?”

“You are not the only one to have studied it,” he scratched his head and gave me a half grin. “Or experimented with it.”

“Says a lot about being, doesn’t it?”

“The results of the experiments, yes.” He stood up and stretched as though he were about to leave and then sat back down. “You get into your mother’s head and it works because all your intentions are about love.”

I looked at the young man hesitantly. “I’ve had some degree of success with business people too.” I did not like talking about this and slid him an uncomfortable look. “Friends and people close to me too,” I nodded with my head down and closed my eyes. I knew instantly where I was when I opened them and I didn’t want to be there.

“Your intention,” the young man smiled and I noticed the beard was gone and his face took on characteristics of my mother. I could not help but stare. He looked like my mother in drag, only many many years earlier. “You can’t go in there yet.”

“I know,” I looked at the tile floor of the emergency room. In dream time I was drifting between the hospital and the Chinese restaurant across the street. I was standing in line completing forms on a clip board, and at the same time I was across the street waiting for take out. There was finality inside me, a feeling that this was it. It finally happened. I brought my partner of twenty three years to the emergency room and knew deep down inside that he was never coming home again.

“All that surgery,” the young man moaned in a yawn. “All that radiation and chemo,” he shook his head as a doctor approached us. “We can go in now.”

“This memory is all twisted,” I said defensively as I stood up and walked across the room with the young man.

“Is it?” He asked as we approached an open room of beds, some with curtains drawn partly around them.

We circled the beds and it seemed as though we walked in this room for a long time.

“So who do you think you are?”

“There is me of course,” I stopped and looked at the young man. Suddenly I felt like my partner Gerry. I had his perspective, his tastes, his interests. Then all of a sudden I felt like I was my mother. I was separate from them, and yet I was not, I was me. “What a gift,” I looked him in the eye.

“They take on parts of your persona too,” he smiled. “The greatest gift we share in our journey is identity.”

“And that speaks volumes about the nature of being.” Suddenly we were back in the coffee shop. “I am not I, am I?”

“You are more than you just as I am more than I,” the young man laughed. “Ultimately, we are all each other.”

## EXPERIMENT: OPEN YOUR HEART

### Part 1: Me

1. Before entering a meditation period or before going to sleep, reflect on the thought “I am more than I”
2. Recollect people and personalities whom you admire. These may be individuals who are or were a routine part of your life, or they may be historical or contemporary figures whom you admire but have never met.
3. What aspects of their personalities, their traits and preferences, do you share?
4. How can these shared identities continue to help you as you move through this incarnation? What might they do or say when faced with the problems and challenges you are facing?

### Part 2: You

1. Before entering a meditation period or before going to sleep, reflect upon the people in your life who are facing challenges.
2. How might these problems or challenges impact other people and the environment? What is the best possible outcome?
3. Reflect upon actions that will help the person face these challenges with the best outcome for all.
4. Imagine you are the other person and re-think the action and next steps from their perspective.

*it just is*

being  
is here there and everywhere

*yet there are slices,  
fragments you might say  
that are collected  
yet exist  
in an individual realm*

yes,  
unlimited  
infinite  
and ever changing

*the consumer and the consumed*

fluid and moving  
in octaves of motion  
within and beyond

*and what about me?*

being  
without dimension or direction  
includes you

look in the mirror

*I see you*

and what about me?

*You are the object*

*and I am part of your*

*reflection*

and the others?

*I resonate with some,  
they are out there*

*on the border of reflection*

ever changing, we are

*and the journey continues*

## GRIGORI & NEPHILIM

Outside the bedroom window was a huge tree. The light from the afternoon sun would gloriously stream in between the branches of the tree and land on the center of the bed. The sun was warm on my body and yet didn't block my view of the branches that would sway in the wind. On weekends when I found the time for an afternoon nap I would study the reflection of the leaves and branches in the window. If I looked to the side instead of straight at the reflections I would find a marvelous array of faces, some of them so detailed they looked like photographs. However one movement of my head, or a sudden swift wind, would give them odd non human like features. Sometimes if I focused on one particular detail, such as an eye or a mouth, the detail would morph into a marvelous slide show of faces. At other times the entire tree was populated with portions of faces, and if I selected one to study the entire face would soon zoom in. They were always silent, yet some of them carried a desperate expression of wanting to communicate. In a near sleep state I invited one of them to speak to me.

"Watch out for the Nephilim," a man with big ears who had features like my mother said in a warning tone. The warning tone was oddly like my mother as well, and the approach was sing song as though he were speaking to a child.

"You mean the boogeyman?" I was feeling in control and laughing inside, somewhat awake but quickly slipping into a dream and submitting to a borderline state of subconscious impulses that were gaining control.

"Hey," the man was standing at a bus stop beside me. "Boogey's got his roots in Nephilim"

"What do you mean?" I followed him on the bus and sat beside him.

"They are not necessarily ugly or spooky." The man looked me in the eye and in that instant I remembered the boogeyman who lived in the shed on the other side of my grandfather's garden. There was a broken pane of glass in the window and his head was always hanging there. Most of the time it was a mop with long stringy ropes that hung like hair. He was definitely ugly and very scary.



“Didn’t you always feel like he was watching you?”

“I did as a kid, but it was just a stupid old mop. A few years later I found my way into that shed and ripped the mop out of the window. It was odd being on the other side of the fence and seeing my grandfather’s garden. It was late fall. A few old corn stalks and tried up tomato and basil plants littered the garden, and the fig trees that lined the fence beside the shed were wrapped and anchored to the ground. There was a bench in front of the fig trees. When I was feeling courageous I would sit there and study the head of the mop. It was then that I discovered that if I looked to the side, and the light was just right, a face with detailed features would appear.”

“And where they spooky and scary?”

“Not at all,” I studied the man’s head and face. He looked so familiar but I knew I didn’t know him. “Sometimes I had this expectation that Boogey would come to life and run after me. I did not sit on that bench and study the mop very often, only when I felt courageous, and that was usually in bright sunshine when there were other people around.”

“So the concept of a boogeyman, that myth that weaved its way into your childhood experience, gave you permission to sort of push the envelope.”

“It did.” I studied the man’s head. Very dark and straight wet hair was neatly combed back. It was a wet look and the smell of hair tonic brought me back to my childhood. He had a haircut very recently. The hair was trimmed very closely around his ears, which accentuated their large size and over extended position on each side of his head.

“Watch,” his head nodded up and down and his tone was like my mother warning me about something. “Watch for the Nephelim.”

“Ok,” my hands went up and I looked him in the eye. “What are you talking about?”

“Well you are wondering about beings beyond the visible world, is that right?”

“Yes I was thinking that when I was looking at the tree earlier. I was wondering what they truly were. It seemed odd that I could find so much detail in this random arrangement of shadows and light.”

“So do you think they truly exist?”

“Only in that I exist.”

“Clever,” he scratched the back of an ear.

“I’ll be straight with you,” I scratched an ear in imitation of him. “I think they are part of a mental process of association. So yes, much of it is imagination. And that leads me to a place of trying to understand subconscious intention. So, to put it plainly, I don’t know. Does anyone really know the truth about existence, about being?”

“If so,” he said jokingly. They’d have a thing or two to say about reality as well.”

“Reality is perceptual,” I looked at him. “Why am I having this conversation with you? Do I know you? I don’t think I do.”

“You don’t actually. I am the face of a man who rode the bus with you in the morning, on your way to high school. You never talked to the man. You never met him. We just shared the same space at a point in time.”

“So why do I remember your face? Why did it appear when I studied the reflection of the tree?”

“Because I remind you of someone else. Someone you do know, who wore a similar persona in another life, but you just cannot recall and put it all together.”

“Back to the Nephilim, what’s the deal here?”

“There are two aspects to it. One is your mother’s warning. And yes there is some past life connection there. Do what you will with the warning. The other is about origins, historical context, that sort of thing.”

“Oh,” I took on the face I had when I was fifteen and twirled at the long hair hanging at the front of my head with my forefinger. “My mother’s warning always inspired me to go after and challenge whatever is out there. Umm, let’s not go there.” I put on my middle aged corporate face and sat there in suit and tie. “So talk to me,” I wore an analytical and academic smile.

“Nephilim has its origin in the bible but there are references to similar concepts in other cultures at other times. There were a group of angels referred to as Grigori who were sent to watch over the earth, but they were lusty and gave in to lustful behavior which included every flavor sexuality and adultery. Consequently, they were banished from heaven. The children of these fallen angels and humans were referred to as Nephilim. They were strong and gigantic creatures with immense appetites. They consumed man’s resources, and even began to consume man.”

“Ohh,” I wore my fifteen year old face. “We’re talking evil dudes.”

“We are,” he nodded in agreement.

“I’ve always been intrigued by the gothic in man. I used to love monster movies. I loved being scared, but not too scared, and I never got into the blood and guts stuff.” I returned to the corporate face. “Then I grew up.” I said with a half smile. I guess what really turned me around was something my partner Gerry said when I played a video of one of those old monster movies. I was leaning forward on the couch during one of those tense scenes and he said something about feeling sorry for the monster. I never considered that. I never thought about why the

monster was a monster, how he got that way, or how we could help him instead of hate him.”

“Interesting,” the man nodded again and scratched the other ear. “So from an allegorical perspective, what do you think is the significance of the Nephilim?”

“You mean what do I think of the allegorical concept you are trying to slide my way?” I gave him a cynical but friendly smile. “Actually, I think the Grigori are the interesting ones. I don’t like focusing on the negative.”

“What is it that intrigues you?”

“The whole idea of someone, some entity of beings, who not only watch over us but influence our actions. It makes me feel connected, not so alone.” I looked down and saw my leg bouncing up and down with a nervous energy. “And it doesn’t need to be some ghost or other worldly spook either.”

The man with the big ears laughed and I laughed too.

“I mean there is a ghostly element in all of us, right? Weren’t we all ghosts before we came into this life? And won’t we become ghosts again when this life is done?” I looked down and my leg stopped bouncing. “I don’t mean in a spook sense,” I clarified. “I mean from an energy and personality perspective.”

“I suppose,” he scratched his head and there was a nineteenth century foppishness about him. His suit was tight and stylish and he carried an aura of being highly polished and clean. There was a pleasant smell about him too. “Yes as you know about energy, it can attract or repel.” He stroked his chin and his persona took on a professorial air. “So you believe that this energy, this aspect of you, not only remains and continues, but also attracts other energy and personalities?”

“As above, so below,” I looked him the eye. “That’s what keeps us going. Not only that, but energy builds when there is camaraderie.”

“So this Grigori concept, the idea of someone watching over, we have a choice based upon our attraction or repulsion.”

“Yes,” I paused and pursed my lips. “But there is trickery there too. That’s what the Nephilm are all about.”

“And that’s why your mother and I tell you to be cautious of the Nephilim,” he lifted his head and his tone was somewhat condescending. His head shook rapidly and he batted his eyelashes. Suddenly his character changed and he became the patient professor. He sat there without speaking for a moment. “The Grigori were a band of angels.”

“Yes and some of them went bad.”

“Oh forget the good and bad thing, let’s move on.”

“No,” I looked away from him and out the window. “You keep harassing me about the Nephilim thing and I need to comment about trickery.”

His face wrinkled and a smile emerged. “Please do.”

“I think it’s more about manipulation than trickery, but anyway when I talked about the faces earlier I made a comment about them not being scary or threatening. That isn’t entirely true. Anyway, there have been faces that are disfigured in some way and they are usually staring at me with a look of desperation. I’ve learned that there are two conditions when I should never look at these faces. One is when my consciousness is altered, when I’ve taken some kind of medication or drug. The other is when I am feeling highly emotional or stressed. I experimented when I was in my teens and early twenties. They were very unpleasant and frightening experiences.” I turned from the window and looked into the professors eyes. “If we talk allegory again, what I’ve talked about here can be compared to Nephilim.”

“And that is what all the caution is about. You already know.” He broke the stare by looking away. “So let’s move on.” He turned and looked at me again. “I promise I won’t harass you with the Nephilim stuff again.” He blinked apologetically and then looked me in the eye. “The concept of the Grigori, the band of angels, the watchers whose intention was to guide and protect, is much more relevant to our current state of being.”

“I’ve always had such an individual focus, and when I think of energy I usually think of it from that perspective too.” I squinted my eyes and looked out the window in the distance. I did not focus on anything specific, I just stared into space. “But the idea of a band of angels, or even a group of people with a common intention or working toward a common goal, well that generates energy too.” I looked at the professor. “Group energy is different in my experience. A synergy goes on that creates a unique group perspective that is beyond yet inclusive of me and every member of

the group.” I looked out the window. “Whenever a group is formed for a specific purpose or intention an energy is created from those beings, and that energy, that element of being, continues even after the group is disbanded.” I looked out the window and then back at the professor. “Right?”

“One small correction,” the professor nodded with a matter of fact expression. “Remember that energy is an attribute of being. Without being, energy cannot exist.”

“Assuming that being is all.” I quipped with an academic flare of confidence. “If being is all, nothing can be separate from it.”

“Assume that,” he chuckled with a nod. “You will come to believe it.” He paused and looked at me. “That’s not fair and I take that back. Let me say it another way. Your will have some experiences that bring you to this conclusion.”

“Ok,” I nodded like a little boy. “So in a way we choose our Grigori, don’t we?” I paused in reflection. “In two very different ways. First there is that attraction/repulsion thing, but I guess that isn’t really a choice.” I took on a flustered look. “Never mind,” I leaned toward the window on the bus. “I mean just because there is this attraction doesn’t mean you have to reciprocate.”

“No, no,” his eyes grew wide in encouragement. “You are right, absolutely.” He nodded his head. “So tell me,” he fingered his chin. “Who are your Grigori?”

“Everyone on that tree.” I said automatically, referring to the faces that came from the reflection of the tree in the bedroom.

“There are never any strangers there? People you don’t know?”

I sat in silence for a moment. “Not really. There are faces I don’t know but there is always a familiarity, a feeling like I know them from somewhere.” I paused and looked at him. “And then there are people like you. People I truly don’t know but who remind me of someone.”

“You were attracted to my face when you were fifteen years old and it’s been on that tree ever since. Who do I represent? Any idea?”

“Not a clue,” I shook my head with a half smile.

“So rewinding a little bit, we talked about groups of people. Any of these people affiliated with a group that included you, or that attracted you?”

“Oh,” my eyes grew wide in discovery. “Of course, yes. I mean when I think about some of the people, well I can’t readily link them to a group,” I scratched my head. “But it depends on how you think about the term group.”

“Tell me what you are thinking.”

“Well places I’ve worked, departments that I have been in, schools. That’s all part of this, right?”

“Yes. They all involve people in groups. They all produced an energy that is still accessible.”

“But if the group is disbanded, if the group is no longer functioning, well then the energy is no longer building. So does that mean it is just kind of out there and will remain dormant until someone is attracted to it?”

“Well yes,” the professor shrugged and then leaned forward in the seat. “Some Grigori are more predominant and important in our lives.” He leaned back and squinted his eyes in my direction. “Tell me about the really predominant Grigori in your life.”

“The Catholic church,” I made a smile with my mouth closed. “I am no longer a practicing Catholic, but the people and experiences I had very much shaped who I am.”

“Psychically as well as psychologically.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well psychically you have a connection to that energy. Psychologically, it’s part of your cognitive process in relating to and assimilating experience.” He cocked his head and studied me. “There is a more appropriate term when

thinking about these things from an esoteric perspective.” He straightened his head. “You are familiar with the term egregore, yes?” He tilted his head again. “It is a more evolved concept, derived from Grigori.”

“The Rosicrucian studies talk about egregore.” I tilted my head away from him. “It is the collective energy of the order.”

“Yes. And it is an energy that you are a part of, and that you can tap into. The egregore has all the knowledge, all the experience of that group.”

“Taping into it is abstract for me. It takes imagination for me to get from here to there. That imagination brings me to a personal sanctum, a place that for me is representative of everything spiritual. It is a place that I go to in contemplation, and a place where I am inspired.”

The bus stopped and we both got off. “Like this,” his arms spread wide and he looked at me with a broad smile. Before us was a grand church that reminded me of the Grace Church in Manhattan, but it was in a country setting. Spires seemed to climb to the sky, and there was one particular spire that attracted me.

“Go there,” the professor suddenly took on a priestly image. “Go there and contemplate the Grigori closest to your heart.”

## ESSAY: THE DELUSION OF I

Existence beyond self is obvious to humans. Inherent within us is the realization that I am who I am and you are who you are, which brings about a feeling of separateness. Not all animals experience that sense of separateness, and those that do most likely experience it in different ways. I am a human within the lives of four dogs, but to them I am just another dog and one of the pack. Even within our own species, there is a good deal of variation in our understanding of our separateness. The variation comes about because of our experience, and the knowledge that builds because of it. Experience and knowledge are the transformational elements of our journey.

In our journey we ask why and who am I, and somewhere along the journey we experience a connection to something else. Sometimes that experience is with other beings right here in our physical world, and at other times there is a sense of connectedness with something beyond the physical world, with something cosmic. At some point we experience a connectedness with God, and from the experience we come to a realization that God is not separate from us. We come to the conclusion that we are actually a part of God. When we truly contemplate we question the idea of being a part of God, thinking perhaps that we are part of all. God is all. If God is all, then how can anything be separate from God, and how can I be separate from other beings?

Regardless of where our thinking takes us and how we answer the questions about the nature of God, we eventually come to some conclusions about the experience of self. We can have experiences beyond self, and therefore our belief about the separateness of self becomes a delusion, a false belief.

With the new light of understanding comes a darkness, a memory and fear of regression. What is it that this new understanding brings? Am I again like one of the animals who does not distinguish self from the world around him?

As I contemplate the question of my being I conclude that I am. I have an awareness of this self that I cannot deny. However, I now have a sense of duality. I experience self, but I also acknowledge that I have experiences beyond self. I conclude that I am a dual being, and that the experience of duality requires a separateness and an awareness of that separateness.

Consequently, when I experience otherness I lose my sense of self even though I retain an awareness of it.

What about identity? If I am not I then how and what can I be? And do I have a choice about what aspect of being I experience? What I am truly asking in these questions is about what control the self has. Ultimately, the question of control is a question about the nature of energy. Are energy and being one? Can being exist without energy? If being is all, then energy is an attribute of being.

The world is my influence, both seen and unseen. I abide by the laws of attraction, but what is it that I attract? Ultimately, what I attract and what is attracted to me is the energy of thought. I am attracted to the thought of other beings, and other beings are attracted to my thought. The attraction provides opportunity for shared experience.

Influential beings in the mundane world are often easily identified. Some of them we choose, and others just seem to come into our lives. Unseen influences are often a mystery that make us uncomfortable and we rarely invite them to exceed the boundaries of the subconscious. Imagination is a tool that we can use to release unseen influence from the subconscious. Sometimes what comes forward is little more than a different manifestation or nuance of self that results in a new way of perceiving some aspect of the outer world. At other more rare times, the experience is truly the influence or experience of another being. Imagination is a safe and non-threatening method to integrate unseen influence into our mundane experience.

Whether seen or unseen, influential beings provide an opportunity to experience shared being. It is through shared experience that we obtain greater light.

In summary, being has a shadow-like quality that can be thought of as a duality. We experience it by means of self or ego, and yet we can also experience being in a more shared or collective fashion. In time some of us conclude that being of self is a reflection of something greater than self. Being is not a choice. Being is. How we experience being is, however, a choice. We can choose to experience it in degrees ranging from self to shared to collective. Our ultimate choice is how we manage the delusion of I.

## MY EVOLVING CREED: BEING

1. I believe that being is all and that nothing can be separate from being, and that energy and being are one
2. I believe that divine thought created the cosmos
3. I believe that there are three aspects of me; physical body, psychic body and soul
4. I believe that thought is an attribute of being and a form of energy. I believe that group thought and intention creates a collective energy and experience that is accessible to anyone attracted to it
5. I believe that thoughts produce reality on physical, astral and cosmic planes
6. The human condition permits us to experience and separate self and non self. I believe that in actuality being is all, and that in the journey to this realization individual identities are shared
7. I believe that space, like time, depends upon the relationship of our consciousness to the conscious experience of others.

## Cluster 2:

*One Plus One is Three*

## SUMMARY OF CLUSTER 2: ONE PLUS ONE IS THREE

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God is energy

exploding particles into a cosmic all.

call it

nous -

a binary force creating

soul energy

spirit energy

life

matter

Spirit energy dances

spins

swirls

and I imagine

the pluses

and minuses

attracting

repelling

accumulating

in a God inspired dance of love

picture it

a 3D illustration

in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade

science book

of the future



## THREE SPECIAL PLACES

There were two bookstores in town that called to me as a kid. One was clean and neat and had wonderful displays, but they didn't really have a lot of books. They were gracious and always offered to order a book for you, but unless it was school related I didn't have money to spend on books. What little cash I had as a kid was from a meager allowance as well as any odd little jobs that I could get like shoveling snow from someone's sidewalk. Besides, the other bookstore was more fun. The first floor was pretty much like the other bookstore, everything neat and orderly with all the best sellers set out in a nice display. However, in the back of this bookstore was a narrow staircase that led to a basement filled with old books that sold for fifty cents or less. It was a great place to hang out. I'd spend hours looking through old books and reading sections, then prioritizing the books I would buy. Sometimes I didn't buy anything. No one seemed to care.

The basement of my favorite bookstore also had lots of characters that roamed about. Almost all of them were adults, and most were men. Some people would notice what you were reading and engage in conversation. There were times when I would pick up a book after someone else spent time thumbing through it. It was a combination of the book and the person that attracted me. Anyway, there were lots of discussions about literature and philosophy, and most of it was metaphysical in nature.

The basement was well lit in the center and bordered by tall bookcases. Between the tall bookcases were semi lit aisles that weaved beyond the borders of the bookstore itself. The floor was sloped and was uneven in parts, and the aisles at times seemed to descend into dark caves and then emerge back out into light again. There were tables scattered about and an occasional lamp. I also remember a lot of cobwebs and dust, which made me sneeze. In my dreams the basement of this bookstore became a metaphors for the universe. It went on and on without beginning and without end. It contained all the answers to every question you could ever imagine. There were times in my life when I was pounded by profound questions about the purpose of life and what happens when people die. Sometimes I would dream about finding the answer in the bookstore. I would roam about, looking for the book that would answer my question. Sometimes I

would open a book to just the right page. On several occasions the answer would be on a slip of paper that acted as a bookmark. On other occasions I would bump into someone reading a book, and we would talk. There were times when the answer only made sense in dream time, and other times when the information I received transcended the language of dream.

“We can find truth in sacred space,” A man was standing at a bin of books some distance away. I could not see who he was talking to, as the bin jutted outward between bookcases into a semi lit aisle. Instead of approaching them directly I thought I would walk behind the bookcases in search of the semi lit aisle where the voices came from.

“Space is truly an illusion,” A teacher like woman with short hair snapped back. She reminded me of Jane from the Beverly Hillbillies. “As is time.” She shook her head rapidly with her eyes closed.

“Well yes.” The man’s voice was soft and deep. He had bushy black eyebrows and thinning grey hair that spiked up in spots. “But we must penetrate the illusion by partaking in it. Think of it as a reality that was created like a painting, a work of art,” he puffed on his pipe but there was very little smoke. “And the purpose of it all is simply for you to experience this other being’s perception.” He half closed one eye as he reached in his pocket for a book of matches. He lit the pipe and a cloud of smoke burst from the pipe and into the woman’s face.

“My point,” the woman fanned her face with her hand. “Is that if there is such a thing as sacred space, then all space must be sacred.”

“And what about degrees of sacredness?” The man continued to puff on his pipe and lit another match. No more smoke came out of the pipe.

“Point taken.” The woman took a pouch from her small purse and rolled a cigarette. “It all comes down to self perception, you know, what’s important to the individual.” She held the cigarette upright between thumb and forefinger and rapidly tapped it onto one of the books in the bin. “Faggot?”

I tripped on a box in the aisle and interrupted their conversation. There was silence for a moment. The man took the cigarette and the woman proceeded to roll another.

“And what do you think young man?” The foppish intellectual man smiled and lit the cigarette.

“To say that there is some space that is sacred implies that some space is not sacred, so I agreed with you.” I looked at the woman. “But I agree with you too.” I followed the woman’s line of sight to the middle of the man’s chest and then looked up and found his eyes. “I would not say there are degrees of sacredness,” I pursed my lips and touched them with an index finger. “But I would say that the quality and quantity of energy varies from one space to another.”

“Hmm,” the woman looked at the man and they both shook their heads. She lit her cigarette and glanced at her watch. “Oh I do have to run.” She picked up a couple of books and headed for the stairway.

“The interesting thing,” I nodded to the woman as she glanced back. “Is not so much the idea that the energy is different in different locations, but that we as perceivers of energy perceive it differently.”

“And receive it in a way that can either be of benefit, or can be a hardship.” He waved to the woman as she made her way up the steps.

“So are we talking about the energy in the space, or the person perceiving it?”

“Actually, I would love to engage in a conversation with you about favorite places. Do you have time?”

“There is always time in a dream, until the alarm anyway.”

“So you know you are dreaming?”

“Well right now I do, but sometimes I don’t.”

I wandered down one of the aisles and the gentleman followed me. We walked for a few moments and turned down another dimly lit aisle that led to a seating area. The floor was broken cement and dirt, but this section was covered with a plush oriental rug. There were two wing chairs in the center that faced each other. We each took a seat."

"So how old are you?" He cocked his head and then rubbed his chin. "You look about 13."

"15," I lied and studied his face. It was changing but I didn't know into whom.

"Do you like this one?" He turned into Richard Burton. "Or this one?" He turned into Sean Connery.

I was silent for a moment and looked at the floor. "Actually I am 56. I am wearing this persona because I think this aspect of who I am will work best for this discussion."

"Then you need to turn me into someone who can help you best facilitate this discussion."

I looked up and the face of the man was suddenly my father, but his eyes were not as penetrating. In less than a blink the man turned into Edward Carpenter, a 19<sup>th</sup> century mystic whom I have admired all my life. "So we were talking about sacred space."

"We were." I nodded and smiled.

"You know in order for our approach to be meaningful we need to make it personal. You agree that different places have different qualities of energy, yes?"

"I believe that, yes."

"And you believe it because you experienced it, correct?"

"Yes. And I believe that my experience in certain places can be different."

"But don't you think there are some commonalities?"

"I don't know about that."

"We will explore that possibility," He shook his head. "What I would like you to reflect upon are all the places you have been in this life, and select three that had the greatest impact on your being. Try not to associate incidents that may have happened in these places, as we are concerned only with energy and the reaction that the energy created for you."

"There was a space in my grandmother's neighborhood that was different from any other space. I don't know why I remember it. I don't think anything happened to me there, but I am not sure."

"Tell me about it."

"It was a few blocks away from the house. I passed it everyday on my way to school. There was a gas station nearby, and a telephone pole."

"How did you feel when you were in this space?"

"Intoxicated. Like I would never get past it. I don't think it was more than thirty or forty feet. It made me very tired to walk thru it."

"And what happened when you walked thru it?"

"It's like it wasn't me. I felt disconnected with myself."

"Did it scare you?"

"No. It didn't scare me, but it was uncomfortable. When I was in this space I had a sense that I was more than who I was. It was a feeling of being more than one person, but only one person at a time if that makes sense. I remember feeling like a kid, but not the same kid, and then an adult."

"What else do you remember?"

"Remembering the space."

“What do you mean?”

“Well over the years there were times when I was there, mentally, I mean that’s where my consciousness was. It wasn’t planned, it just happened.”

“Give me a picture of what is going on when this happens to you.”

“Memories. Simply memories. But the memories have feelings.”

“The picture first and then the feeling.”

“I am in a courtyard playing with another little boy. I like him. He likes me. We are playing with stones that I guess are like marbles. There is a lady watching us. Another lady comes and carries me away.”

“And the feeling?”

“I wish my father were king,” I gave him a confused look. “I don’t get it. What’s the point?”

“Stay with me,” his hand was in the air waving me down from my emotional reaction. “Forget the picture and the feeling. Tell me about the energy.”

“Well,” I composed myself. In this space I felt different. I felt tired, disconnected from self. It also facilitated a different awareness of self.”

“Great,” the handsome mystic stood up and raised his hands in the air. “The point is that there is an energy in certain places that creates new realization for you. New awareness.” He smiled graciously. He had a short white beard and wore a white shirt with the collar up. A funky tie hung to the middle of his chest. A tight vest was unfastened and seemed to stick to his mid section. His pants were like knickers with a kerchief like sash tied around the waist. He wore brown socks that were a shade or two lighter than the knickers and they went almost to the knee. On his feet were sandals with lots of straps. “Be careful how you interpret the picture,” he pointed a finger in the air and sat back down.

“The odd thing is that after I experienced the space I could take it with me.”

“Remember space is an illusion. In that illusion are different spaces containing both different and similar energy. That’s why some places remind you of other places.” He leaned forward in the chair. “Stay in illusion, play in illusion.”

“Let’s move into a discussion about delusion. You made a comment about interpreting the picture. Go back there for a moment.”

“Sometimes we are ready to believe because we need a firm construct. Perhaps the concept of reincarnation has a degree of readiness for you. In this case you might interpret the boy as yourself in a past life. If you were studying the law of assumption you might conclude that the boy is a child in your class and you have become him for just that instant. If you put yourself in metaphor from a psychological perspective it is identifying with a “poor me” persona, the worthy victim who has to fight for his fair share.”

“So what do you do with these impressions?”

“Do? What do you do?” He was pompous and then laughed. “Is that like you people ‘doing’ lunch?”

“It’s a nice verb,” I joined him in laughter. “No really, what is the action that comes out of it. What do you do with it?”

“Experience. That’s all. Experience.” His eyebrows rose and fell. “Do you need to find instant meaning in everything?”

I nodded silently. “Hmm. I don’t totally agree with that. Experience is opportunity, and the opportunity is to change or modify your intention or behavior. That’s a whole other topic. Perhaps we should talk about that another time.”

“So give me a second place that had great energetic significance for you.”

“Wait. Before we go there I need to finish the discussion about illusion and delusion. I am very clear about delusion, that comes from within, but illusion is more difficult to comprehend.”

“What is on your mind?”

“The nature of space. If it is an illusion that space contains different types of energy, is it also an illusion that there can be empty space?”

“Yes. Being is all. To say that space is empty or void implies non being. God is all.”

“I understand your thinking, but don’t you think illusion is a bit harsh?” I scratched my head and looked him in the eyes. “And there is a pompousness about describing space that way. If something has an attribute, it is what it is and that is all that it is.”

“Point taken,” Edward smiled. “You see what we in the body have difficulty comprehending is the entirety of what is, and at the same time the simplicity of it.” He took a deep breath and exhaled. “I don’t mean to be pompous,” he apologized. “And the statement that it is what it is and only what it is, is truly profound. You can take wood for example and make a chair, a table, or even build a house, but in the end you have not changed its quality. If you started with pine, you have pine. It is what it is.”

“Sort of,” I made a funny face. “Until you get to an elemental level.”

“That is true,” Edward nodded. “Let’s go there for a moment. Philosophers in antiquity identified four elements in our universe; air, water, earth and fire. Contemporary atomic theory breaks it down even greater, into electrons and such, and then goes on to identify these fundamental elements as having positive and negative qualities.”

“It is what it is what it is.” I crossed one leg over the other and jiggled my foot, an action I frequently take when I become impatient. “And what you are describing is spirit energy. Space is an aspect of being as are you and I, and an attribute of space is energy. Energy has different qualities.”

“Energy is an attribute of you and me as well,” his eyebrows rose and his dimples paused to make a point. “To focus our discussion,” he paused and crossed his lips with a forefinger in search of brief silence and then refreshed his facial expression. “Is to gain an understanding of the energy in our environment so that we can attune with it and progress on our journey.”

“So let me tell you about another experience, another special place.”

“Go ahead.”

“I lived in a house about twenty miles north of New York City for twenty some odd years. The garage was behind the house and there was a funky alley that went from the main road to the garage. Anyway, there was a space beyond the garage that wasn’t my property. I think it belonged to the village. Regardless, it was a spot that fascinated me.”

“You are fifteen remember. Be fifteen years old and recollect this space. In what way does it fascinate you?”

“It energizes me. It makes me aggressive. It makes me anxious. It makes me want to move. It facilitates my anger.”

“And how big is this space?”

“Small,” I shrugged and left my shoulders up. “You could fit a car in it.” I looked up and released my shoulders. “I mean a horseless buggy,” I said jokingly.

“I know what a car is,” he cocked his head. “Remember, I lived until 1929.” He smiled politely. “Give me a picture like you did before, and then a feeling.”

“There isn’t a picture that comes to mind. There is like a quiet rage.”

“Well tell me about the rage.”

"It is about the polluted earth, the filth that we have allowed to accumulate here. It has a lot to do with water. In my mind I am continually journeying from one body of water to another. I am in this space beyond the garage. I rise above it like a ghost then center myself over the house. This in some way centers me, centers my consciousness. I fly down the road to the Hudson River, then fly in the other direction to the Long Island Sound, and then I am swirling above the Atlantic Ocean."

"Describe the energy. What is going on inside for you?"

"First it is anger, rage, and then it transitions to a sense of gaining control. There is a confidence that envelops me and a sense of power."

"And is this a portable space too?"

"Oh yes, but not in the same way as the energy from my grandmother's neighborhood."

"How is it different?"

"It has to do with breath. When I bring myself into the first energy I am hardly breathing. It is a very shallow breath, interrupted by periods of not breathing at all. The second energy that I described brings me to a place of open mouth breathing, almost like panting but not quite that intense. The breath energizes every part of my being and I need to move."

"What happens when you bring yourself into the second energy?"

"Man I get things done," I shook my head looking at him. "I move from aggravation to aggression to assertive control. I get ideas, hunches, and I just move forward to make things happen."

"Do you have a third special place?"

"It's a mixture of places at this point, so no there isn't a third place that is as specific as the other two."

"Tell me about the mixture. What do the places have in common?"

"They all involve water, like an ocean or river or lake. In addition to water there is also a beach. In my mind's eye it is an odd mix of Key West, St. Croix, and Drakes Island Maine."

"You are fifteen, remember." Edward crossed one leg and then the other. "Can you keep the mixture within this realm of experience?"

"Oh easily. The mixture is three or four beaches that I grew up on in Connecticut."

"What is happening when you are there? Describe the energy."

"It is nurturing, supportive. I am happy, content. There is calmness, a concern for taking care of self and others. There is great love in this energy."

"You seek this space often, don't you?"

"I do," I inhaled deeply and my exhale was nearly a yawn. "It's like the other two places are portable. I can close my eyes and be in the energy. With the third I can close my eyes and be there, but it is not as potent as actually sitting by the water. It is like a tranquilizer."

"And what is the breathing like?"

"It involves deep breathing, right to the stomach, and there is a calm centeredness that radiates outward and relaxes every part of my body."

"Three special places," Edward smiled broadly. "Or three sacred spaces," he cocked his head and studied me.

"Did you hear that?" I shifted anxiously in my chair.

"I think your friend is back."

"Friend? What friend?"

“Hello,” a sing song voice echoed above us and suddenly the lights went out.

“We’re here!” I yelled at the darkness, remembering the light switch at the top of the stairs. I have been known to shut the switch when I thought no one else was in the basement of the bookstore. I was always nervous doing it, as I could never be sure, but I never shut the door. Suddenly I was afraid the door was going to shut, in fact I knew it was going to shut. The voice came again, “Hel lo o,” it sang and the door slammed.

“Are you afraid?”

“A little,” I said to the familiar voice across from me. “If this wasn’t a dream I would really be afraid.”

“Just sleep then. Close your eyes and relax.”

I did as Edward suggested. I imagined myself lying on a sunny beach and let myself slip into a dream. “If the basement is like the universe,” a man said from a distance. “And there is a door above it.” Suddenly the man was beside me and we were sitting on a rock in an old cemetery near where I grew up. I thought he might be a priest. “Then it implies that there is more than one universe.”

“Oh,” I leaned against a tree and felt myself drifting upward. It was the same feeling I had when I was in the space by grandma’s house. I felt like I was outside myself. I felt like I was me but someone else and someone else. I felt dopey, drowsy, other worldly. Suddenly there was a night sky filled with lights and I was drifting, then soaring past them.

“Ok I want to wake up now,” I said as I paused in a symphony of lights. I tried to open my eyes but they just would not open.

“Can’t,” a voice echoed back. It was my own voice. The lights seemed to dance and then pause again. Suddenly I was standing in the space past the garage and I was angry. “Can too.” I said firmly to the night sky, determined to open my eyes. I knew I was on the beach dreaming. I let the thought of the beach sooth me. Suddenly my eyes opened.

“What a dream,” I said hoping the familiar voice was sitting across from me. “I was drifting in darkness and then light.”

“Where do you want to take this?”

“Huh?”

“You are still not awake. You were dreaming within your dream.”

“Oh,” I struggled to open my eyes and was confused by the sensation of darkness all around me. “If I am dreaming I can create whatever I want.”

“Then proceed,” Edward’s voice was soothing and gave me permission to continue my dream. Suddenly we were surrounded by candles and in the soft light I found comfort in Edward’s smile. The light of the candles seemed like glowing orbs, similar to the lights in the night sky that I had just visited.

“Well,” Miss Jane was standing before the two of us like a teacher. Her short hair slicked downward and landed just above the upturned collar of her white blouse. “So in summary,” she slid into the darkness for a second and returned with a blackboard on wheels.

“We’ve talked about several things, but the main topic is special places,” She stood on her tiptoes and wrote these words in the top left corner of the blackboard. She studied it for a second and cocked her head. “No,” she shook her head and pursed her lips as though she tasted something bad. “Let’s change that to sacred space.”

“Good,” both Edward and I said in unison.

“Now what other major topics did we discuss?”

“Energy,” I said and watched her turn to write it in the left center portion of the blackboard. She drew a squiggly line between ‘sacred space’ and ‘energy’.

“What else,” her eyes danced between me and Edward. “Hmm?”



“Well we touched upon a lot of things,” I glanced at Edward and then back at Miss Jane. “Those two topics are the core,” I scratched my head. “I mean the other things we touched upon were really incidental.”

“Incidental you say?” Miss Jane asked and rounded her lips. She placed both hands together as though she were about to pray, then leaned forward slightly. She fluttered her eyelashes.

“I disagree,” Edward was stroking his chin and studying the blackboard. “The very core, elemental basis for our discussion is the nature of being. Perhaps we did not thoroughly explore this, but it truly is fundamental to the concepts of energy and sacred space.”

“Wonderful,” Miss Jane leaned back like an animated puppet and pretended to clap her hands without making any sound. She then threw the chalk up in the air a few inches and jiggled her skinny body to and fro in an effort to catch it. The chalk fell to the floor and a piece broke off. Edward silently retrieved the larger piece and handed it to Miss Jane. She erased the word ‘energy’ that was in the center of the blackboard and wrote ‘NATURE OF BEING’ in capital letters. She drew another squiggly line and opposite it wrote the word ‘energy’.

“Start here,” she rapped at the blackboard with her knuckles and then pointed to the words ‘NATURE OF BEING’. “We are not starting a new discussion,” she raised an arm defensively in the air with her palm toward us. “We are simply summarizing what came up in our discussion related to this topic.”

“Being is all,” Edward said smiling.

Jane turned her back and wrote the words on the blackboard.

“To simplify this,” I said searching for the piece of chalk that was still on the floor. “Let’s do all three rows at once.” I found the chalk and reached to get it, then stood up and approached the blackboard.

“No, no,” Miss Jane made a silly laugh. “I am facilitating,” she smiled and bowed at the waist.

“You are fifteen,” Edward reached for my hand as I passed him to return to my seat. I found his hand and there was a gentle squeeze.

“Under ‘SACRED SPACE’, would you write ‘no such thing as empty space?’”

“A huh,” Miss Jane sang the words as she wrote them on the blackboard.

“Being is energy,” I looked at Edward for confirmation and he smiled. “Would you add that under ‘NATURE OF BEING’?”

Miss Jane did as asked. “You guys spoke considerably about illusion and delusion. Are there any summarizing points you would like to make regarding these categories?” An arm swung outward to fully display the blackboard.

I looked at Edward. “I don’t like the word ‘illusion’ within the context of space, but I don’t have another word. In the ‘sacred space’ column please add ‘space is an illusion.’”

A flustered look overcame Edward’s face and an outstretched palm came forward and grabbed it. “The human condition,” he exhaled heavily. “Carries with it a limited perceptual ability; if you would like,” he glanced in my direction and then studied my eyes. “You can change the words to “Due to limited perceptual ability, space is not what it seems.”

“Ok,” I shook my head in agreement.

“What about energy?” Miss Jane rapped at the board.

“Oh a lot,” I looked directly at her. “First, the energy in certain space creates a condition or awareness in me. Second, the energy in space is something that exists in all time. It is portable. Third, breathing is impacted.”

Miss Jane wrote 1, 2, 3 underneath one another on the blackboard. Under the number 3 she made three bullets. “I’ll get to this in a moment,” she rapped at the blackboard.

“One, energy in sacred space is portable,” she wrote the words. “Two, energy in sacred space has an impact on breathing.” She paused and looked at



me, then at Edward. "Three, breath creates a shift of energy in the body that produces a unique condition or awareness."

She stood up tall and fingered her chin. "Let's talk about this."

"You described three distinct conditions that the spaces created in you," Edward said looking at me.

"Yes, one was assertive, triggered by aggression and a need for action."

"Can we describe that one as masculine?" Edward caught my eye.

"Absolutely."

Miss Jane wrote the word 'masculine' by the first bullet.

"The second bullet is really a flip of that. It is caring, loving and supportive. We can describe that as feminine."

Miss Jane captured the second bullet.

"The third is very different," I looked at Edward in search of a word. He looked at me with a blank stare. "It changes my orientation, brings me to a different awareness. The first two inspire me to action; action that is assertive or controlling, or action that is caring and supportive."

"It is the gift that comes from two. Remember, from the two come the three and from the three come all things."

"So the duality that is an inherent quality of energy not only applies to the creation of the material world from positive and negative elements of spirit," I squinted my eyes and studied him as I searched for the right words. "An aspect of that duality remains as a predominate feature."

"So," Miss Jane found a wooden chair and placed it in front of the blackboard. "Fascinating discussion," she shook her head and studied me. "So how can we label this?" She made a third bullet and tapped the blackboard.

I looked at her with a blank stare and then at Edward. "Sacred space is not the point of this, is it?"

Edward was silent and then shook his head no. "What's really on your mind?"

"I guess it is the idea of psychic perception. What I described to you in my three special places is really my recollection of three psychic experiences." My face took on a perplexed and sad look. "And I can't make sense of them." I looked down. "But during each of these experiences there was an awareness of beyond self. It's like I am an extension. Sometimes there is a sense of both self and non self. It's like having an experience from someone else's perspective."

"Edward rubbed his chin with his thumb and forefinger. "What we perceive psychically sometimes cannot be interpreted by the brain."

"But was it the sacred space that initiated the experience, or was it me that used space to create a sacred experience?"

Edward smiled and said nothing. "Look at what Miss Jane has written on the blackboard concerning energy. We said that it was portable, remember that. We also said that it was impacted by breathing. Remember, in some cultures breath and soul are the same word. Think about that. The third point was that breath creates a shift in energy. You said it created a unique condition or awareness."

"And I started to describe the three conditions, but maybe there are only two, the plus and minus, the masculine and feminine, the passive and assertive."

Miss Jane sat back and relaxed in the chair, then leaned forward and erased the third bullet.

"You made a comment before I arrived about the energy within us, within you. Talk about that."

“Just as I am an expression of duality, so are the people and the physical world around me. Sometimes I can find myself out of balance, I mean energetically, and if I put myself in the right environment I can find harmony. Sometimes a walk in the woods or a trip to the beach can make things better. Sometimes removing myself from the company of others can help too.” I looked at Edward and then looked down. “And sometimes I just have no control.”

“And when that happens, keep in mind that thought of sacred space being portable. You can achieve that harmony from mental reflection and concentration.”

Miss Jane underlined the word portable on the blackboard, and then rested her hand on her chin.

“And where does harmony take you? What is the opportunity?”

“It takes me to a place of physical harmony, health. It also brings me to a place where I am open to psychic perception.”

Edward smiled and nodded yes, then closed his eyes.

“Excellent,” Miss Jane clapped her hands.

“Wow,” I nodded and shook the hair out of my eyes.

“Any further points on sacred space and psychic perception?” Miss Jane stood up.

“I think we are all right for now.” Edward said softly. He stood up and walked toward me. “I encourage you to think about the different places you journey, the people in your life, and evaluate how the energy impacts you.” He looked directly into my eyes. “And remember the harmony you experienced in sacred space. It will always be there.”

Suddenly the lights came on and Edward and Miss Jane were gone. I wandered through the aisles toward the staircase, browsing at books on my way.

an invisible power

invades the space  
which appears  
cluttered  
with  
civilization

the uncivilized mind,  
content within the boundaries of natural law,  
sings, yearns  
to identify  
civilization's cause and cure

space,  
singing itself electric  
is open  
and available

still there.  
pure mind,  
energy,

being with me  
of me  
and not me,  
all at the same time

there is energy accumulating in my heart

anticipating expression      with verbs in waiting,

there is me in the gut      strutting a dance of the ego,  
defending, protecting  
a lonely self

a desperate yearning

finds energy

out	there
up	there
over	there
attracting me	repelling me

needing me  
giving me  
spending me

## LEAVE IT TO LEFTY

I am at Red Rock Crossing in the Village of Oak Creek, right at the place where the river narrows and trees hang over the long smooth stretches of red rock like swaying canopies. The river divides the energy in this space in obvious ways. Obvious, that is, if you open yourself to the inspiration of the earth. I lean back between two trees and allow myself to enjoy the warmth of the sun. In front of me is a circular path of stones that winds its way from where I am sitting to the other side of the water. A deep breath brings opposing polarities to swirl within me and I open myself to the exhilaration it brings. A deep exhale brings me to a state of complete relaxation and I allow myself to let go of self and become absorbed in the beauty that surrounds me. The absorption is a mental process, a thought process of self discipline that allows for integration.

I take another deep breath and lean back further to study the sky. Awareness is triggered within me. It is an awareness of the energy within this physical being, and the different energies that surround me. I wonder how this energy impacts the spiritual aspect of my being. I exhale and take another deep breath, then lie back completely and close my eyes.

The right brain aspect of my being asks, "What is it about energy that you are trying to figure out?" I imagine myself looking at a caricature of my left brain. Left brain me is wearing a suit and sitting at the head of a conference table. He has a pad and pencil, and in the top corner of the first page of the pad is an agenda. The first item is definitions. Right brain me slips out of him like a ghost. He loosens the tie, takes off the shoes, and doodles in the margin of the first page.

"Let's go back again to the idea of being," Lefty suggests and then proceeds. "Being is all. There is no such thing as non being. Being is energy. Energy is not generated, it is accumulated, implying that there are times when energy, being, is at rest or inactive, and there are other times when energy is more active."

"A great place to begin," Righty says and is truly grateful for being brought back to this point. "So let me see if I can articulate for you what I am trying

to figure out.” He unbuttons the top button of his shirt. “You know I am so grateful for your perspective. I wonder sometimes where it comes from. Maybe it’s my father, he was so analytical.”

“Hmm,” Lefty raises his eyebrows and looks away, and then looks back with a smile. “Go ahead.”

“There are really three questions. The first has to do with the energy in me. The second has to do with energy in the world around me. The third has to do with the impact that energy has on my awareness of the physical and spiritual me.”

“Great,” Lefty laughs and points to the agenda he scribbled on the pad. “As you can see there are four agenda items. However,” he leans back in the chair and places his feet on the table. “So you don’t think I’m totally anal we are not going to do this sequentially.”

“It’s ok,” I nod approvingly. “I do appreciate your perspective and I am not judging you. You are part of me.”

“Ok enough,” Lefty motions with his hand. “We talked about being. Being is all. Sometimes I think you accept this intellectually but you feel otherwise. Harness the feelings.”

“Ok,”

“Now let’s talk about self. But I want you to think about self from the perspective of being. There is me, and there is not me.”

“The thought of dividing being into me and not me is cold. It leaves me with an icky feeling. Ultimately, all is me anyway right?”

“Stay with me,” Lefty interrupts. “There is self, you, there are other selves that are not you, and there is matter and environment that is not you. If that leaves a cold, icky feeling think of self as a preferred state, a condition needed for development,”

“Got it,” Righty stands up and moves toward a large TV set.

“Not yet,” Lefty nods his head. “There is energy in self, be that your self or another self. You can be influenced by another person, accumulate energy from them, share energy with them.”

“Hmm,” Righty nods. “And the impact can be staggering. Let me share it with you because I think it is rooted in feeling, not thought.”

“I don’t agree, but go ahead.”

“We’ve been living in the desert for a year. For the most part there isn’t much human contact. I mean, we live in Hooterville. The people we interact with are different from people in the city.”

“Turn on the TV.”

“This isn’t just a TV,” Righty walks toward the screen and reaches for a helmet that is under it. “It’s a simulator.” He reaches for a remote and turns it on, then uses the remote like a mouse and clicks on the simulator icon. An inquiry screen comes up. “Where’s the keyboard?”

“There,” Left points to the place where the helmet was.

Righty retrieves the keyboard and types ‘Newark Airport – March 2007’. “When I click on ‘ok’, put on the helmet. You will see, hear and feel what is happening. Although it will seem that we are really there, we are not, so we will be able to have a conversation as though we were watching TV.”

“Let’s do it,” Lefty looks at Righty and absorbs the ghost.

I am sitting at the gate feeling annoyed that the flight is delayed. “It is what it is,” Lefty reminds me. “Let’s take a walk like we did, remember?”

“No, first just relax. Remember, we brought ourselves to a place of complete relaxation, and then slipped into a brief meditation.”

We briefly floated in meditation and found a place of peace. It was an open, passive meditation. Images and feelings of peace popped into my head and were not interrupted by the sounds of the airport. It almost felt like a happy sleep. The thought occurred to me that I should take a little walk, and on my way back to stop at the men's room. I opened my eyes and felt as though I were in a daze as I walked toward the aisle.

"It's like being dizzy," my left brain noted as we were walking down the aisle.

"All these people," my right brain reacted. "Did you get that?" I asked as we bumped into one person and then another. "The feelings I mean."

"All I feel is confused. I can smell them as well as see them and hear them."

"It's not just a feeling of confusion. Let go. Let it happen. Feel the panic in that Chinese guy's heart? Feel him racing? And that skinny lady; feel her anticipation? And the sad old man. Can't you feel him struggling? He doesn't want to go. He is tired. Don't you want to sit him down and tell him that everything will be all right?"

"But everything may not be all right. I don't want to be invested like this. I feel like I am being beat up, bombarded with someone else's baggage."

"Literally, feel that woman's anger at having to throw away some of the stuff in her purse at check in. She is still carrying that anger. Can you feel it?"

"What is this doing to you?"

"It's slowing me down. It's interfering with me, with my agenda, with who I am."

"It's like noise, non stop noise that creates stagnance."

"And it does something else," I took off the headphones and let Righty's ghost slip out next to Lefty in the conference room.

"It shuts me down. Remember how open we were feeling when we were in the meditation? Now I'm just like no, go away, I can't, I need to focus on me."

"Hmm," Lefty nods. "So what does this have to do with energy?"

"You've got to be kidding. It has everything to do with energy."

"Just checking," Lefty laughs. "If you open your heart and your mind the energy from other people can build upon the energy within self, making you more active or less active."

"Or numb," Righty interrupted. "But is that limited only to people in the body?"

"What do you think?"

I slipped back into him and typed a new inquiry.

"The perfume lady. Remember you and Steve both experienced it? You are lying there in bed and this woman is present in the room. Feel her? It's cool and clean. The perfume is cheap and strong. She is on her way somewhere. She has to go somewhere, do something. How does she make you feel?"

"Like I want to move. Like I need to get ready for something."

"And the energy?" Lefty separated from Righty and was sitting at the other end of the conference room.

"Sort of wound up, but in a caring motherly way. It makes me feel like I gotta do what I gotta do, so why not be optimistic and be inspired to action." Righty takes a seat at the other end of the conference room by Lefty. They both look at a flipchart in the corner.

"Right," Lefty nods. "Let's summarize."

Righty speaks while Lefty captures the thoughts on the flipchart. “Being is all. Being is energy. Energy can be inactive or at rest, and can be active. Self is separate from non self. Individual selves can experience various levels of energy. Energy is impacted by feeling, emotion and thought. Emotions, thoughts and energy can be shared by incarnate and disincarnate beings. The energy of one being influences another.”

Lefty studies the flipchart when he is done writing. “There are two pieces left to discuss. One is the concept of spiritual. The other is energy in our worldly environment that is separate from self.” He flips a page on the flipchart and writes ‘spiritual’. “So, what does this word mean?”

“Well it can’t be something separate,” Righty strokes his chin. “Spirituality is not a separate state. It is not about being apart from this world or even abstaining from it.”

“Then what is it?” Lefty cocks his head with his hands on his hips.

“It’s a way of dealing with the world at large. It’s about behavior, ideal behavior.”

“Are you implying that spirituality is about virtue?”

“Yes.”

“And what are the ideal virtues?”

“Tolerance, understanding, kindness, forgiveness.”

“Why?”

“Brings us full circle,” Righty scratches his head. “We are all one in actuality. To achieve that oneness requires harmony.”

“Nice,” Lefty nods and sit down. “So what is it about this environment thing that we need to work out.”

“Just as there is energy in other beings that we can share, there is energy in the environment.”

“Right, and we’ve talked about the masculine and feminine flavors that come from earth, air, water and fire.”

“Yes but we didn’t talk about two things. One, how the body regulates, shares and integrates this energy, and I’ll include people energy with that for lack of a better term. Two has to do with how this energy can bring about awareness for the perceptions and actualities beyond self.”

“Regulation and integration is done by the psychic centers in the body. Yes, I get impatient with this concept. You can’t see them, feel them, touch them.”

“You can’t even count them,” Righty laughs. “Some say they there are seven, some say there are nine, some even say there are 12.”

“It doesn’t matter how many there are, or what you call them.” Lefty said with a broad smile. “What matters is that they are.”

“Tell me your experience.”

“Well it’s hard to summarize. And it’s difficult to talk about if it the idea of an energy center is taken out of context.”

“So give me the context.”

“There are three aspects of me. One me is the body, the physical me. Another me contains the duals aspects of soul. From the dual aspects of soul, a third me was created. Some call it the psychic part of who we are and refer to it as the psychic body, others refer to it as the astral body.”

“And this psychic or astral body is the where these energy centers reside.”

“Sort of.” My face pruned up and I swallowed hard. I wore an expression of mental strain, as I tried to remember and at the same time integrate all I had learned on the subject. “They have physical representation in the body as well, in the organs and glands, and each of them are associated with a specific color.”

“And this corresponds to the human aura?”

“Yes.”

“So if this psychic body comes about when the soul incarnates, what happens to it when the physical body dies?”

“It dies too, but not at the same instance.”

“That poses a host of specific questions, but let’s not go there now.” Righty wore an expression that was a mixture of doubt and intrigue. “Talk to me more about these psychic centers.”

“Like I said before, don’t get hung up on how many and where they are.”

“Well the Rosicrucian’s teach that there are twelve distinct centers.”

“They do,” I took on a frustrated look. “And you are the one who has been trying to create a definitive spreadsheet, remember?” I focused my gaze on Lefty and was silent for a moment. “Promise you won’t go there?”

“Ok, ok,” Righty raised his hands in protest. “Look,” his face took on a look of compassion. “Just talk to me. I am not going to give you a grade for completeness.”

“There are core centers in three major areas of the body. The heart is the middle area, and the gateway to the higher centers.”

“And the heart is about emotion, higher emotion, like love. What else?”

“There are several below it. One has to do with the ego, with the self and the lower emotions. Another has to do with creativity that has our sexuality at its core, and another has to do with our connectedness to the earth, our safety.”

“So those are the lower psychic centers. Summarize the higher ones.”

“Well like I said the heart is the gateway. Actually, the heart can be two separate centers, one that is focused on love from a self perspective and the other that focuses on the grander unconditional love for all mankind.”

“Oops, minus ten points,” Righty laughs. “Really, it doesn’t matter if it is one center or two.”

Lefty ignores the comment and continues. “The heart center is the light of the soul. It opens you to giving and receiving love. The throat center is where we hear and express the voice of the soul. This center is about communication, but communication of the higher emotions. Lower emotions, emotions of the ego, are expressed below the heart, around the navel.”

“Energy can be held in these centers, trapped there.”

“They can even be over expressed.”

“What about the higher psychic centers?”

“This is where it gets tricky. Before we go there let’s talk about how you can focus on psychic centers to integrate and regulate energy.”

“Not now. Knowing that they are there and available is all I need at this point. We can summarize how to use the psychic centers in another discussion.”

“Ok. So let’s talk the tricky part. Actually, this is very much related to the second question you had about awareness and perceptions. The remaining psychic centers are in the head. Again, don’t ask me how many, but they correspond to the physical senses.”

“So the third eye alludes to psychic sight.”

“Yes. And there are centers in the nose and the center of the head that also correspond to the physical senses; smell, touch, sound.”



“So there is an expanded reality.”

“No. We’ve been here before. This is about your second question. There is reality based upon the physical senses and the experience of the self. And there is actuality; experience and truth that are beyond sense perception and a self orientation.”

“So what I need to do at this point in my life is to find an environment that is in harmony with the path I have chosen to follow. I also need to put myself in the company of others who spend energy in ways that are in harmony with my values. These virtuous behaviors open a door to greater awareness and psychic perception.”

Lefty shook his head affirmatively. “There are other factors that have an effect on personal energy. They have to do with life style, things like what we eat and what we do with our body.”

“And,” Righty stroked his lips with a forefinger. “You wear it all in your aura. Remember that your aura is an expression of all of you. It includes the physical you, the you impacted by other people and the environment, as well as a broader spiritual you.” He pressed a forefinger to his lower lip. “It all contributes to what we are after, which is greater psychic development, truth and actuality.”

“Hmm,” Lefty nodded and looked me in the eye. “I’ve never been able to perceive the aura, mine or anyone else’s.”

“Yeah you have,” Righty squinted. “You get a sense for color and sound but you are never sure what it means.”

“Well you are the analytical one. If you can’t assess meaning, why bother?”

“Your choice,” Righty took a deep breath. “But we both know it doesn’t work that way. There is no grand matrix or table. It’s personalized. It’s were you are in the scale.”

“It’s about sound and color,” Lefty shook his head. “And I agree, there is no grand table. There is a specific note and color in the spectrum that resonates perfectly with me.”

“And you know what they are. That is your orientation. Seek energy that produces sound and color that best supports your orientation.”

“I don’t know how to do that.”

“Think about it,” Righty scrunched his face. “You’re the feely one. Think about how certain energy, color and sound make you feel.”

“Ok,” Lefty shrugged apathetically.

“Real world,” Righty looked Lefty in the eye. “Be careful of the greys, and the muddy orange and muddy greens.”

“Oh yeah,” Lefty’s eyes grew wide. “There are shades of orange and shades or green that just don’t work for me.”

“Hmm,” Righty nodded and Lefty blended into him.

I opened my eyes and found myself in an awareness of the energy of Red Rock Crossing. I opened myself to this energy, and gave myself permission to enjoy the divine feminine energy that radiated from the river and the rocks. I slipped into a passive state, and enjoyed the wind and the sun. I looked up and drank in the blue sky, then closed my eyes and slipped into meditation. I gave thanks to the earth, plants and animals, and sent thoughts of love and peace to our planet. I gave thanks to all the people who have come into my life and shared energy with me. I sent them thoughts of love and peace. I asked the cosmic to help me attract the energy that I need and was startled by an intriguing thought. “If energy does not resonate well with me, perhaps it is an invitation to explore and expand conscious awareness.”



## ESSAY: ENERGETIC CHOICES

Energy is everywhere and intrinsic to being. It is within self, a blend of the physical and psychic bodies that are expressed in the aura of light that envelops each one of us. It is everywhere in our environment too; the space we live in as well as the lives around us. We give and take of that energy. We attract and repel. We influence it and it influences each of us.

In a sense energy is an attribute of being, but in actuality energy and being are one. Just as self within the context of being is an illusion, so too is self within the context of energy an illusion. The energy contained within each individual self is not isolated or independent, but rather is connected to and very dependent on all that exists around it.

Each incarnation has a starting point, a particular place with a specific cast of characters that set the stage for the drama that plays out our destiny. However, the environment and the cast of characters are not fixed. There is a range of possibility, and a large degree of choice. The choice builds from the energy we are attracted to, as well as the energy we attract.

How many people come into our lives within one incarnation? How often do we travel to foreign places, change our place of residence? What choices play out from our attraction or repulsion? How do these choices ultimately affect who we are, and who we are to become? Sometimes the world of work or career have a great influence over the choices we make, as do our relationships and the people in our lives. Sometimes we don't always make the best decision about where to spend our time, or the company we keep. The people and the environment of our choosing drain us of energy rather than energize us.

How conscious are we of the choices we make and the impact they have on our personal energy, our aura? How conscious are we of the energy we attract and accumulate, and the energy we spend?

What feels good is usually right, however we are attracted to some energy that may not seem optimal and yet it becomes optimal in the grander

scheme of our life destiny. There are two important facts to keep in mind, one is about balance and the other is about conscious awareness.

Conscious awareness is the door to service. With conscious awareness we can be in the presence of people that we have little in common with, who may behave and have values that are not in agreement with our own, and yet we are not negatively impacted by their energy. This is so because our conscious awareness has a helping intention that ultimately is about love.

Conscious awareness is also a door of opportunity, opportunity to attract those of service to us. As we desire to help others, others desire to help us.

Sometimes the attraction may not feel comfortable. It may feel aggressive or harsh, more assertive than we prefer, or more feminine, or more right brained or more of whatever opposite duality exists. And yet when we follow the attraction that may seem uncomfortable it inspires us to think or behave in a different way, which results in a consciousness that is broadened or expanded.

One key factor to keep in mind about energy is to maintain an awareness of the choices that are available to us. The other key factor is about balance, about harmony. We accumulate energy from people and the environments we live in. We also spend energy, and in this process our energy is accumulated by the people and environments around us. Energy flows. As best we can, we should be one with that flow. With the transfer and flow of energy comes a readiness for psychic development, and the opportunity to expand who we are and who we will become.

Ultimately, energy is about love and the journey to one. As expressed by Lao Tzu, "From the one comes the two, and from the two come all things..." The opportunity for the two comes from the menu of choices that are available within the boundaries of an incarnation. We have the opportunity, the choice, to say yes or no to that which attracts and that which repulses us. We are an integral part of being, as well as an integral aspect of the energy expressed within the 'all'.

## EXPERIMENT: ASSESSING PERSONAL ENERGY

1. Consider your environment and the people around you. How do they make you feel physically? Emotionally? Draw a line that represents where you feel you are on the following scale.

---

*Drained of Energy*

*Energized*

2. Consider how you feel about the dual aspects of your energy, and draw a line that represents where you feel you are on the following scales.

---

*Passive*

*Assertive*

---

*Left Brain Motivated*  
(*cognition/logic*)

*Right Brain Motivated*  
(*feeling/emotion*)

---

*Feminine*  
(*caring & mothering*)

*Masculine*  
(*bold, fatherly*)

3. Consider your current situation, your goals and long term aspirations. Draw a line that represents where you think you need to be to achieve success.

---

*Passive*

*Assertive*

---

*Left Brain Motivated*  
(*cognition/logic*)

*Right Brain Motivated*  
(*feeling/emotion*)

---

*Feminine*  
(*caring & mothering*)

*Masculine*  
(*bold, fatherly*)

4. Do you have any perceptions of sound or color? What do you think they mean?
5. If you are feeling drained of energy, take the time to access why. If you are overwhelmed in a current situation it may be appropriate to make a significant life change. If you feel that the challenge is within your grasp, work at attracting and accumulating the energy you feel you need.

## EXPERIMENT: ATTRACTING & ACCUMULATING ENERGY

### From the Environment

1. Take a hike or walk in nature. If you are in a city or large suburb, find a park or zoo where you can take a stroll. Notice the trees, shrubs, flowers and plants. Study them as you walk. Allow them to create an awareness of their presence within you, and with your thoughts send them an awareness of your presence. Seek peace and harmony with nature as you walk, and send thoughts of love and peace.
2. Find a place in nature to attract the energy you feel you need. Listen to your heart in terms of what elements in nature have feminine and masculine attributes. Generally speaking, a need for calmness and the divine feminine is usually by water. Find a place near a river or stream where the colors are subdued and blended. Masculine energy is usually of the earth. If you are feeling a need for strength and assertion, find a mountain and climb it, or study the waves of a crashing sea.

### From People

1. Visit a park or public place where there are a lot of people. Find a place to sit and relax and observe the people around you. How do they make you feel energetically? Aside from physical attraction, what is it that draws you to certain people? How do they make you feel? Stop observing those that make you feel uncomfortable or that drain your energy. Continue observing people that bring about a pleasant feeling and have an uplifting energy. Close your eyes and take in the energy from these people. Send thoughts of love and peace before you open your eyes.
2. In meditation, reflect upon people in your life who have energized you in a positive way. Use your imagination to bring yourself back into their presence. Accumulate energy and send thoughts of love and peace to them before you move on in your meditation.
3. In meditation, open the door to inspiration from others of like mind. This may be people in your current life, people who have

passed away, or individuals you have studied and admired. Picture them in your mind's eye and open yourself to their inspiration. Accumulate energy and send thoughts of love and peace to them before you move on in your meditation.

4. In meditation ask for guidance, support and loving energy from the cosmic. Accumulate cosmic love and energy, and send thoughts of peace and gratitude to the cosmic.
5. In meditation, open the door to be of inspiration to others. This act of sharing may help another, and can also be of benefit to you.

### Sacred Space

Space is an illusion, and space is portable. In meditation, recall a place that brought about an inner harmony for you. Create this place mentally, knowing that we are wherever our consciousness takes us.

### Egregores

1. Reflect upon the egregores that are part of your identity. Are their groups that you no longer belong to that influence your outlook or behavior? Which groups and affiliations are most important to you now? Why?
2. Personalize the most important and influential egregore with your imagination by making it a physical place. Create a vision and personalize it by adding elements of related egregores or experiences.
3. Project yourself to that imagined place. In meditation, open your heart and ask for guidance.

## MY EVOLVING CREED: ENERGY

1. I believe that energy is inherent within us and our environment, and that energy is accumulated rather than generated.
2. The divine essence of the cosmic is brought to the body from breath. I believe there is a connection between energy and breath.
3. I believe that energy is dual in nature, and that all things have a preference for one aspect of that duality over the other.
4. I believe that there are energy centers in the psychic body that correspond to the physical body where energy is accumulated, held and distributed.
5. I believe that auras are an expression of energy that can be sensed and shared.
6. I believe that the energy of other people and our environment has an impact on our own individual energy, and that seeking energy that is in harmony with our true self brings opportunity for psychic perception and development.
7. I believe that the heart is the gateway between the lower and higher energy centers, and that the higher centers provide opportunity to experience consciousness beyond self.

## Cluster 3:

*Rewind & Fast Forward  
at the Same Time*

## SUMMARY OF CLUSTER 3: REWIND & FAST FORWARD AT THE SAME TIME

### *Perfectly Divine*

79

Dream like meditations on a collage of east and west coast beaches raises the question about the nature of sin and the idea of divinity within. Sin is defined as any behavior that has a negative or devolutionary effect on being. How is it possible to contain divinity, to be one with all, and at the same time be absorbed in self and have the potential for harming another? The idea of the spiritual path as a journey of marriage between body and soul, head and heart, is explored.

### *Faces in the River*

91

Imagination is used to stretch memories of spiritual desire and initiation. An array of characters from subconscious memory and dreams engage in dialogue. A doll maker from another era, along with a priest and a rapist, emerge to share the facilitation of an inquiry that exposes feelings of guilt and self worth on a journey for spiritual truth. These characters morph and share identity with one another as well as others, revealing emotional truth concerning past lives, ethics and personal values, and the nature of consciousness.

### *Essay: Three Stages of Consciousness*

121

A discussion about the confusing and often contradictory language that is used to describe consciousness is followed by a proposed working definition. Distinctions are made between the psychological and mystical perspectives of consciousness, and how its meaning differs when viewed as an attribute of soul rather than an attribute of mind. Three core aspects or stages of consciousness are explained.

### *Experiment: Expanding Conscious Awareness*

125

Techniques that can be used to experiment and explore the different stages of consciousness.

### *My Evolving Creed: Consciousness*

128

A list of relative, personal truths about consciousness.

### Cluster 3 Poetry:

<i>truth, talk at me</i>	77
<i>imagine consciousness</i>	87
<i>the 'I' of this soul personality</i>	88
<i>you. I saw you before. I know you</i>	89
<i>memories are a scientific queerness</i>	90
<i>consciousness is a lonely place</i>	120

*truth, talk at me*

why am i on this planet?

*swing down.*

i did.

lower.

*love me.*

why?

*because it is,  
because you is.*

and who am i?  
a puppet of god?  
truth: i need truth.  
i need a remedial.

*you are forever.  
you are fragments.  
you are right now  
a fragment, a self  
searching for a whole in  
other dimensions*

*be the fragment you are,  
integration will come.*

And in part 2?

*in part 2 you discover that  
God  
is within you*

## PERFECTLY DIVINE

I am on my favorite beach, the beach of my imagination. I am standing up in the dunes, leaning against my bicycle. Straight ahead is the Atlantic Ocean with a few nude sunbathers. As I follow the coast to the left in my imagination it becomes Ogunquit, Maine and then Drake's Island. If I follow the coast to the right it becomes San Diego. Behind me in the distance is Long Island sound, and if you follow the bike paths you will find the beaches I grew up on in Connecticut. If you continue on the path and truly focus and concentrate, a beach in Key West will appear and then eventually morph into a beach in Fredericksted, St. Croix.

Beaches are where I find truth. They nurture me and give me permission to listen to the voice within, to follow my heart and make new discoveries about myself and the world around me. Beaches bring me peace, and an opportunity to integrate this ever evolving self.

I walk my bike over the dune toward the highway behind me, then ride my bike over the bridge that crosses the highway to a quiet horseshoe shaped beach. I lean my bike against a tree and walk a few feet to another tree. A blanket suddenly appears in front of the tree with a pillow leaning up against the trunk. I settle in and make myself comfortable. There's a bird in the distance, flying above the shore. I watch him as he flies across the beach toward me. He settles on a branch in the tree across from me. I know this bird very well. He is no ordinary bird, and in fact he is not really a bird at all. There are times when I become him, and other times when he becomes a personification of me from another time and place. We have wonderful dialogues.

Suddenly the bird disappears and a teenage me is standing before me. "Let's talk about the concept of the divine." A lawn chair suddenly appears and the teen settles in. "Do you think our species started out perfect, and through our behavior we became corrupt?"

“The thought brings me back to Catholic school as a kid. The idea of sin and being judged is not only emotionally revolting, it does not make sense. Why create a perfect being and at the same time create sin? “

“Hey, I’m closer to that than you are. I know I am queer for example, but I am scared shit about what that might mean, about what God might think about it. That’s just an example. But when I look at you, knowing you are me, I know it will work itself out.”

“Over the years I’ve created a working definition of sin that has helped me move through the world. First of all, sin is behavior. It is behavior that has a negative effect on another living being. It is behavior that presents an obstacle to spiritual growth and development for the self. At the same time it is behavior that presents opportunity for growth and spiritual development.”

“I hate that word sin.”

“Me too. Behavior is behavior. Forget the concept of sin, there’s too much emotion in it for both of us. Think behavior.” I settle in the lawn chair and avoid looking at him. “As for queer, think of it as a blessing, a gift that has been given to you to help you achieve what you partnered with God to achieve between this and the last incarnation.”

The teen looks down then into my eyes for a quick second. His eyes are wide and attentive. He puts on an arrogant face. “So this idea of divine versus corrupt brings me to a place of trying to understand why there is duality and why all this paradox.” He lights a cigarette and exhales proudly as though trying to impress me with how mature he is.

“That’s a tough habit to quit if you ever decide you want to,” I look at the teen with a blank ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ expression. “Duality is natural law. You will learn about that. Divine is perfection. We are a marriage of body and soul. The soul is perfect. Always was, always will be. The soul is not separate from self, and our sense of it is a reflection of cosmic oneness.”

“That idea of cosmic, of self being absorbed by it, is a scary one for me.” The teen plugs the cigarette in the sand like a nail then relaxes his facial expression.

“And it will continue to be. To be honest I am still uncomfortable with it at times. What brings me comfort is the realization that I, we, are forever becoming. To be a specific self is limiting. We are forever integrating. Integrating past lives. Integrating who we are in this life, who we were in this life, and who we are becoming. Are you the same person that you were when you were 7 or 8?”

“No way. That experience with the nun in Catholic High for example. At 15 I can say I am no longer Catholic. I identified as an atheist for a couple of months, but that was so empty I couldn’t stand it.”

“Tell me the nun story again. You are closer to it than I am now. Remember you are 15 and I am 56.”

“I was asking God for a sign. I wanted to know truth. I signed up for this Catholic School stuff because I truly wanted to find God. Remember, I toyed around as a kid with the idea of becoming a priest. Anyway, I especially remember home room. All those prayers. And the same time that the prayers were going on there was all this contradictory behavior. Boys goosing one another with pencils. Girls giggling. My home room teacher out in the hall whacking some kid for being late.”

“I forgot about that.” I watch the kid flip his head to get the hair out of his eyes. I forgot about that too.

“Anyway all of it was just so emotional. To say the least my expectations for finding the divine just didn’t measure up. The church, religion in general, just didn’t seem like the right path. Too many rules. Too many contradictions. Too far away from God. It’s like, ok, God can judge me, I can judge myself, but for some priest or nun to judge me, no way, doesn’t seem like they know enough, can’t be objective enough, to judge me or anyone else.”



“The miracle of confession is in the relationship. It takes empathy, trust, to really have any validity. Ultimately we judge ourselves, and self judgment is the hardest of all.”

“True,” the teen me nods like I still do. “Back to the story. Anyway, I asked for a sign. I needed an event to kind of put it all into perspective. I forgot all about it when the event actually started to happen. I was standing in the hall, waiting to get into my next class. I don’t know why I was in the hall because the bell hadn’t rung yet. Anyway, the bell rang and all the kids that were in that room left and I was the first one in. I sat at the desk and took out my Earth Science book and my notebook. I was writing something about an assignment from my last class and kids were filing in one by one. Then the teacher came and soon the class was full. In walks this nun, red in the face with her fist in the air. She’s screaming at me for something I did and I don’t understand what she is saying. She is really mad. Really angry. My heart is beating fast, and my mind is racing, trying to remember if I did anything. I couldn’t think of anything. I was afraid, but at the same time I felt courageous. I asked her what I did. She told me that I knew what I did and she demanded I step into the hall. I told her I didn’t do anything. She slapped me with the back of her hand and threw me against a locker. A silent rage bubbled up within me, and I resisted the urge to defend myself and hit her back. I told her I didn’t do anything, and that I was being honest. She started yelling at me about writing on the desk and that she saw me doing it. I told her I was writing in my notebook and she slapped me again, telling me not to lie to her. I told her I was not lying and then I asked her how she could call herself a nun. I also asked her how she could call herself a Christian. I told her I didn’t believe in her God. I walked down the hall as she continued to scream at me. I muttered ‘fuck you and your God,’ but it wasn’t loud enough for anyone to hear. Wish it was. I’d like the whole world to hear it. I left the school and walked home. My mother was standing over the ironing board when I walked in.”

“And she supported you. She took you back the next day and withdrew you from the school. Remember that?”

The kid looked at me weird, forgetting that I was he and we have the same mother.

“So back to my original question.” The kid took a deep breath.. “Do you think our species started out perfect, and through our behavior we became corrupt?”

“Corrupt is a tough word,” I said squinting at him. I stood up and walked toward his bike, which I remember well. “Let’s take a ride.”

“Wow, you still right a bike? For real?”

“Absolutely. Take my bike over there. 18 speed. Lots of features you don’t know about yet.”

“This is neat,” the kid gets on the bike and we head for the dirt path that leads to the parking lot and the way home. I am tempted to ride home with him, to see my old room and the tree house and the neighborhood the way it was back then. I decide that’s not a good idea right now and I peddle faster to get in front of him.

I look back and see him fumbling with the gears. “Just push the lever and forget about it. Follow me.”

The dirt path remains the same for awhile and suddenly the landscape takes on a tropical flare. We seem to be moving but there is no pedaling effort to go up a hill. Suddenly we are coming down and racing high speed on a runway. The runway turns into a small road. There is a big willow tree on our right, and chickens running in the street. On the right is the Caribbean and a strip of white sand beach.

“Stay with me,” I turn back to check on the teen. He pedals faster and soon we are riding neck to neck. I smile. He smiles. I notice a familiar spot on the beach and tilt my head to let him know that we are turning. “Let’s leave the bikes here and take a walk up the beach.”

The sky is the same gorgeous blue as the water. We stand for a moment and watch two horses swim toward the shore as we lean the bicycles against a tree.

“Oh God this is heaven,” the kid looks around and looks at me like he is about to cry. It’s so beautiful. Is this like a real place or did you make this up?”

“Oh no, this is quite real. You will be spending lots of February days here when you get older.” I wave to a native who mounts one of the horses, and they turn to swim further out. The other horse walks to the shore and shakes himself off. Another native pats him on the head, then pulls his head toward him and gives him a hug.

We walk up the beach to a quiet spot that is oddly similar to the horseshoe shaped beach from our childhood. Two beach chairs appear and we settle in.

“Like I was saying, corrupt is a tough word. Yes I do think we come into this world in a perfect state. You see in the next world, the world between lives, there is light and love. There are other places too, but this is the place where most of us go. Love is built in. Sin, or behavior that hurts the self or another, is not possible. All is love. When we come into this world we are still in that state. As we progress through the stages of human development we develop more and more of a self. As the self develops, our behavior begins to mold our destiny.

“So you’re talking karma?”

The kid looked at me in a way that said don’t tell me anymore. Not now. Suddenly the kid was gone. I looked up in the tree, and there was the bird rocking back and forth on a branch. It always felt good to become that bird. To retreat. To even fly away. And to fly back whenever I was ready.

“Continue, I’m ready,” I sensed the bird thinking defensively.

I should know better than to intimidate this kid, this me. We have an issue with self esteem and we come back with serious attitude and a need to protect ourselves. “Remember when you were reading James Baldwin’s *Another Country*? Your motivation for reading it was porn. What you got was not expected. Tell me about it.”

“That whole bit about how we don’t create the people who come into our lives. We don’t create our mother or father or friends. They just come into our lives. The greatest gift that we have is to say yes. To experience life.”

“There is truth in that, but don’t be mislead. The experience of life is our opportunity, our chance to evolve on the spiritual path in a way that can only be done by the marriage of the body and the soul, of head and heart.”

“Still a bird here,” I could feel him thinking. I sensed that he was about to manifest into the fifteen year old boy again. His arms folded across his chest. His body language was telling me he already knew all of this. Suddenly he was sitting in the chair, arms folded just as I predicted.

“Can I suggest that instead of thinking about it as, ‘They just come’, think about it as attraction. An attraction based on a plan that you put in place between your last life and this one.”

“I just finished reading the Teachings of Plotinus. He talks about stuff like that. And different worlds, or levels in the next life.”

“That book had a profound effect on us too. You will be reading it again. And again.”

“So this plan is not just karma?” The kid looked confused.

“It’s about development, enfoldment, the mystical path. It’s about bringing you, me, us, back to that perfect place we started from with a broader perspective. Think of a rose and how its starts as a bud and moves through to full blossom and then eventual decay. It isn’t about being or becoming corrupt, or even good or bad. It just is. You, me, we are always becoming.”

“I just don’t get it. If I started out perfectly divine, how come I am not divine now?”

“You are. God is within you. Remember what I said about the marriage of body and soul? This marriage is our goal. It is our destiny.”

“And that small voice within, that little devil or angel they talked about in Catechism, that is sort of the voice, the voice of the soul?”

“Sort of. Religion personifies everything and creates a cultural context that in the end has little if any relevance. The devil, the angel, that whole idea of Jesus suffering and dying for your sins; these are concepts that can bring about psychic discord and even mental problems. Be careful with them. Later in life you will study the meaning of myth and the need for myth making in our world and see it all from a very different perspective. You will also learn about the power of thought and the effect it has on the material and mental worlds. Keep a check on your anger too. It can burn you.”

“So give me a hint here, how do I find this true voice within?”

“Hearing it can be a challenge. Listening for it can also be a challenge. There are ways to make it resonate. Take time everyday to think and contemplate. It does not need to be a lot of time. You like morning. You are a morning person like me. Allow your conscious self to talk with God, then allow your sub conscious self to communicate with you. You may have an instant hunch about what to do, or a thought may come to you later in the day. If you are not ready from a psychological perspective the communication may come in dreams.”

“And if I don’t like what I hear?”

“Try to stay away from letting emotion control you, and remember that you are perfectly divine. God loves you. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

imagine consciousness  
as some kind of software product  
and the universe  
a giant hard drive

you click on a ‘personal reality’ folder on a routine basis

and periodically it uploads to the grander  
you with what you have learned

on special occasions there are downloads and you  
feel enlightened

don’t ask about servers  
don’t ask about chat rooms  
but please, go ahead and make up  
analogies

consciousness is an attribute of the flesh,  
a reflection of the divine;  
blend in ever changing reality,  
a little intellect,  
and you are on the road to  
actuality

the “i” of this soul personality  
is  
the space between  
yesterday and tomorrow

how queer the concept of now is,  
sliding down the palisades in the wind  
from the warm sun at the top  
into the cool river

somewhere in the slide the momentum builds  
from bright sun to shade,  
from dry to wet,  
and i am the river before i even get there!

You, I saw you before. I know you.

*She had big teeth, and a space between the middle two. She had dark hair, and wore colorful clothing with an ethnic flare. She smelled like boiled chicken.*

You don't look like anyone I know. Why did you choose to appear that way?

*I was meditating on sexual preferences, and thinking about the people in life for whom I have felt a sexual passion. Somewhere in the dance of movie stars and fantasies from my childhood this woman's head and toothy smile appeared. She scarred me.*

Oh it's you.

*I'd just seen her a few minutes earlier in another meditation that I can't even remember.*

You asked me to dance.  
We stepped into distant night sky  
filled with tiny dots of light.

*I didn't say you were ugly. I caught myself thinking that I thought you might be ugly, but I could not let the thought fully surface. I didn't think it. No. That would be cruel. I could not be cruel to you. And I couldn't use you.*

Yes you could. And you are cruel to yourself all the time.

*Did I say I wasn't cruel? Maybe I was and maybe she was ugly. It was some other time. Some other space. Some other consciousness.*

memories are a scientific queerness,  
peaking at an edge  
with and without substantiating data

may be,  
may be not

memories are colored by affect.  
emotional hurricanes spin out of control  
creating a sometime denial  
a sometime phobia,  
a sometime delusion.  
a bipolar ghost with a schizoid cousin  
ripple and morph  
truth into non truth to a new truth

believe it, and it is.  
for some.  
or it is'nt  
for others

i follow belief like a fairy tale  
knowing that at anytime, whenever convenient,  
i can  
not believe stop believing

or i can select option 2 and delete the detail and  
extract the essence of truth

visualize the headline:  
*Scientific Study Links Imagination To Reality And  
Ultimate Truth!*

## FACES IN THE RIVER

I am a bird on a wire somewhere in San Francisco by the water. I teeter to and fro in a gentle wind and the motion brings me to a place of peace and self acceptance. I am who I am. I am who I was. I am who I will be. Oh, how wonderful to be alive. I have no specific identity right now. I am quiet and still. All emotion and feeling are pushed to the perimeters of my being and all that is immediately around me is love. Love envelops me. Inspires me. Makes me smile from inside out. In this place of contemplation I am grateful for the gift of imagination, knowing that imagination is the bridge to what will be. It is also the bridge to what was. In actuality there is no time. All is now. In actuality all is in motion. Stillness is an illusion.

Reality is the trickster that initiates illusion. This self with its limited perceptual ability, with its constant need to integrate experience, creates illusions so that I can create structure and identity. As I learn and grow I discard these realities, these illusions, and create new ones as I continue on my quest for actuality and integrated identity.

Emotion sometimes tangles with my realities, my illusions, and there is potential for delusion. Delusion is false belief with a control feature. I sometimes control and manage my behavior because of false beliefs.

When I am the bird all my realities, illusions and delusions are on hold. In this state I understand that in reality there are mysteries. In the ultimate state of actuality all the mysteries are revealed. I swing too and fro on the wire and allow my mind to float from one mystery to another; the nature of consciousness, time and space, life after death, reincarnation. I pause at the thought of reincarnation, then continue to swing on the wire. I close my eyes, knowing that this state of contemplation will bring me into meditation. In the state of meditation there are frequently small bites, tastes of actuality. I ask the God of my heart, the God of my imagination, to bring me to a place of conscious understanding and integration.

Reincarnation interests me from two perspectives; one is spiritual and the other psychological. Spirit and psychology are connected in some way. How did experience in prior lives shape my personality when I came into this

incarnation? What subconscious remnants still continue to dictate my traits and preferences? How has prior life experience shaped my desires, passions, even sexual preferences? How have the experiences in this incarnation modified who I was? What is the history of my spiritual quest? How did I pursue God? How did I understand God and the cosmic realm? What was my relationship with the divine? Who were the players in my journey?

With God's love I can coolly integrate who I was with who I am and transcend to a new me. I take a moment to be one with God, and to ask for this gift of insight.

"Hey," suddenly I am sitting on park bench and a bird is nudging my arm. I can hear him thinking. "Let imagination be your guide and you will be surprised at what you discover. Do not let illusion blind you to the possibility of what could be. Do not allow emotion to morph you into delusional states. In the process of imagining stay with the thought that God is love, that you are love. Love God. Love yourself."

"Are you ready?" A voice from behind startled me and I opened my eyes. I am 26 years old and this is my first trip to California. California means new horizons, an open mind, a new beginning. I turn and there is a man in his sixties wearing a white apron. He has a cautious but kind look. His eyes grow wide and his head slightly nods forward. "Close your eyes and come with me."

There is a sense of swirling and various degrees of light. Sometimes it is very bright and at other times it is like twilight. The light becomes like a series of tunnels and I move through them to a hillside below me. I am come down from the sky to a cobblestone road and realize that I am light. I move fast, swirling thru a European village in winter time. Suddenly I am in a workshop, but I am not really in it I am watching it. It's like watching a movie but with every sense in tact. There is dampness about me and it is cold. In front of me is a workbench. There are small bottles on the bench and what appear to be little brushes. There is also a ceramic round object on the workbench. I wonder if I can touch it, and I reach out to do so. It moved and I picked it up. I quickly put it back down I and realized that my experience was only limited by my desire. I could watch as though all

of this was a movie, or I could jump right in and be a part of it. Suddenly I was uncomfortable. I was afraid.

"Just watch," the old man from the park was suddenly sitting on a stool in front of the workbench. I sat watching as though this were all a movie. He picked up the round ceramic object in one hand, and in the other a small brush. He was painting something onto the ceramic object. When he was done he turned to me with a smile, holding the object in his hand. "What do you think?"

"It's a doll's head," I acknowledged. "Absolutely fascinating, that must be so much fun to do."

"It is," he walked to a wall with a curtain in front of it and pulled it back. There were shelves of dolls and puppets. I studied each of them, but there was one in particular that I was attracted to. I think it was a monkey. It had black fur on its body and did not have hands or feet. The face was round and hard and painted with dull colors. Its big floppy ears surrounded by tufts of brown hair made it appear soft and loveable. "Touch it," the man invited.

I took the monkey off the shelf and studied it. I resisted the temptation to hug it and finally I did. At that instant I remembered Zippy, the stuffed animal that my mother sewed the ears back onto again and again. I remembered too the passion that I had for dolls and puppets when I was a little kid. They excited me in a way that embarrassed me. Dolls are for girls. Suddenly I was back in the workshop and I placed the monkey back on the shelf. I closed the curtain and looked at my friend, returning back to movie mode. He stood up and walked toward the curtain. Next to it was a door. He walked out the door into what looked like a store, but it wasn't exactly a store. There were leather bags and portfolios on a small table, and there was another workbench covered with small tools and shoes. In front of us was a small window. Hanging from the ceiling in front of the window were two puppets that looked like a witch and wizard. Next to the window was a door. I could see that it was snowing, and beginning to cover the cobblestone road. The man walked to the window and pulled a tattered curtain to cover it. He locked the door and walked back toward the small door and into the other room. He stood by the shelf with the curtain,



looking across the room at a small fireplace. He walked toward it and poked at the fire with a stick that was leaning against the wall. The room was oddly shaped; sort of like a crooked L. There was a bed in one corner, and next to it a small table. Next to the table was a little window covered by a tattered curtain. I watched the man undress and put on a long nightshirt and cap. He got into bed and for awhile I watched him sleep. I could sense his dreams, and wondered if I could dream his dreams.

I closed my eyes. I was in a dimly lit room that was somewhat smoky, and there was pungent aroma of cooked potato and stew and some odd spices or roots that were not familiar to me. In the center of the room were several large tables with a circle of space around them. There were people singing and dancing. In the corners of the room were more tables. Considering the size of the room there weren't that many people, maybe twenty or twenty five. All of them were oddly dressed with dark fabrics and scarves, many of them stained with food and drink. Some people were eating and some were in quiet conversation, while others were rowdy. On the far end of the room was a door. I seemed to float across the room like a ghost. No one acknowledged my presence. I drifted toward the door and penetrated through it. On the other side I was surrounded by stone and brick walls and an uneven stone floor. In front of me were stone steps that descended quickly. As they descended they curved to one side and there was a door, and then another door. I continued floating until I reached a third door. I entered into a room that I recognized as an outer chamber to a temple. There were a few wooden chairs, all of them different, lined up against one wall. I looked about and noticed that there were only three full walls. The space for the fourth wall was fully open and reminded me of a gracious porch. I stood in the open space. There were trees above me in the distance, and below me was a creek or small flowing river. To the right was a steep hill, and I could see the water running down it to the creek below. At the top of the hill was small bridge and beyond a few huge boulders and trees.

"Familiar?" The old man was hanging in front of me like a ghost.

"Oh yes. Here, but mostly there." I pointed to the space beyond the bridge where the boulders were. "That is such a sad but meaningful place. I remember being there and looking here. I knew of this outer chamber and

I longed to be there, but I didn't know how to get there. I don't mean just physically get there. This was a special place and you needed to be initiated."

Suddenly we were in the space near the boulders. I remember crying here. I remember sitting, listening to the water. I could feel the longing, the strong desire that I had to be with the group that gathered in the outer chamber. I felt unworthy, unclean. I could hear them talking. I could hear the gong. I could hear them shuffling thru the outer chamber to a temple. I could hear a door close with a thunderous roar, and later I could hear the music in the distance and chanting. Ra. Ma. A-omm, A-omm.

"How did I get from here to there?" I looked at the old man who was still like a ghost and dressed in a long nightgown and cap. "I've had this memory so long I have the sense that I did something wrong, and at the same time there is a great sense of relief, of new beginning."

"There was no one thing that we did. It was a recollection of many things."

"I used to think it had something to do with being gay, that I was an outcast, sort of like the woman who wore the A in the Scarlet Letter."

Suddenly the old man wasn't the same old man. It was me in this life, only a few years older. "Well you had a strong need to explain your feeling, and the only way you knew to do that was to find an element of your character that was not acceptable to the people in your world. Sexual orientation was convenient."

"How odd. I am in this place now, here with you. I am in this place somewhere in my twenties as a memory, and yet I am here back then with the doll maker. All is then and all is now."

I am back in movie mode. The doll maker is the in outer chamber, sitting in one of the wooden chairs. Others are there. Some are sitting and some are standing. I, we, the doll maker hear the sound of the gong. It is deep and resonates through us and we stand. There is a fear and then calm. We

walk to the temple door. I am in a place and yet I am not, as the state of mind has precedence over my physical location. The state of mind is one of initiation. Initiation for me in this life has been an experience of integration; an integration of mind and learning, of experience and doing, of heart and feeling. Initiation brings truth.

“Let the memory of initiation be with you and guide you,” the older me smiled and pursed his lips like I sometimes do.

“I am in this everywhere state,” I shake my head in search of an appropriate identity and suddenly I am 35 in this life. 35 was a time that I began listening to the voice within.

“Instead of focusing on a specific initiation, think for a moment about the overall experience of initiation; about how it makes you feel, about how it begins to change your orientation toward life.”

“I can’t quite do that,” I looked at him and my mind was reeling with practical examples of initiation.

“Ok go there,” the older me crossed his arms in an impatient way and then became the bird.

We are on a huge bolder off Schnebly Hill in Sedona. He is perched on a dead tree that canopies the bolder. “Initiation isn’t exactly an event, although it is, but really it is a state of mind. The big initiation at 35 was becoming a Rosicrucian. It was then that I truly understood the actuality of God, and understood this actuality separate from religion. Once I understood that, once I truly got it, the Rosicrucian order came into my life and opened a door to learning more about the nature of God and the cosmic. There was a familiarity, an at home feeling, and a readiness. This was not my first life experience as a Rosicrucian, I always knew that, and there was also this sense that as I was evolving so was this organization that was so familiar.”

“So now give me a more secular example,” the future me was back again. He was sitting a few feet above me on the same boulder and looking down.

“At 35 I was fully initiated into a corporate world with years of experience as an employee, a follower, a person with lots of ideas that I handed off to someone else. Now I am in a leadership role.” I sat looking up at him. I was in the 35 year old body. “Then and now I am overcome with a feeling of accountability, of being responsible, and there is this odd mix of self confidence and doubt. The self confidence is stronger and more potent. I smile at the opportunity of being a leader. For the first time I feel empowered and that I have power. It is exhilarating, and yet it is always accompanied by inner questioning and self doubt.”

“So the initiation is what exactly?” The older me probed wearing his analytical face.

“It is about being led and then transitioning to lead.”

The future me smiled and the analyst left his face. “Bring yourself to a place of knowing what initiation brings you.” He was fading, becoming like a shadow, and the doll maker returned.

I looked at the doll maker and felt like a teacher. I had something to share. “You like learning new things don’t you?”

“I do,” the doll maker wore an expression that told me he knew I was from his future. He hung like a ghost above me, still in his night gown and cap.

“The way we learn involves a combination of processes. One of them involves reading and study, or listening to teachers and elders talk about what they have learned.”

“I enjoy learning, especially about spirit.”

“Sometimes you get hung up in the ritual aspect of learning,” I smiled at him. “Just try to do it and stay focused.”

“Oh,” the old man looked spooked at what I had said.

“Even now,” I disclosed. “I get flustered when I have to behave in a certain way. It’s like I forget and I waste time and energy thinking about what I am suppose to do and what people will think if I do something wrong.”



The doll maker was silent. His body language told me that he had no clue as to what I was talking about. “Hmm,” he nodded politely.

“I can never remember if it’s right hand over your heart and left hand over your right, or vice versa. “I continued to disclose and shook my head. “I get all hung up on stuff like that and I just can’t focus.”

“Yes,” the doll maker’s eyes lit up and I knew he understood. He let me into his dream. There was a very important initiation coming up in his life. He wore his anticipation in his dreams, just as I do, just as we all do. Someone cut off his night shirt and he was standing half naked in front of a group. At one point he was holding a puppet in a puppet show and the booth disappeared. A little boy pointed to his nakedness and everyone laughed. At another point he was standing in an outer temple and no matter how hard he tried to lift his arms and move a hand to his heart he just could not move.

“Listen,” I came forward in the dream and we transitioned to the boulder on Schnebly Hill in Sedona. “So one way of learning is study, and you enjoy study. Study, however, doesn’t have a practical application. It’s like me studying you with that doll’s head earlier. I could watch what you were doing and learn how to do it, but I still wouldn’t really know how to do it. Do you know how I would really learn how to do it?”

“By doing it,” the doll maker said confidently.

“Absolutely,” I shook my head in agreement. “And so you know that you have an astral body as well as a physical body. You have studied that, correct?”

“Yes,” the doll maker smiled affectionately

“And you have experimented and know it is truth, correct?”

“Yes.”

“So what do you think happens next in the learning process?”

The doll maker was silent and shrugged. We transitioned again, this time to Soldier’s Pass in Sedona. In front of us were the seven pools. We sat overlooking the third pool.

“The next phase is what we think of when we think of initiation. It is the emotional piece. It is coming to terms with what we have learned, and allowing our psychological self in its own unique way to integrate what we have learned into our lives. What we learn changes us, changes our behavior, changes our orientation toward life.”

The doll maker nodded and I sensed that he was half in his puppet show dream. Suddenly his attention returned to me with a very focused look. “But aren’t you afraid?”

“Yes,” I nodded back.

In an instant the doll maker was gone and the older me from this incarnation was looking me in the eye. We were sitting now beside the third pool of water. “We get to a point where we have completed a cycle, a series of events that brings us to a new realm and a new experience.” He took my hand. “You are almost there. Take the time to get yourself in the right frame of mind, lock yourself into a routine of supportive behavior, and let the door open.”

“I am trying,” I looked at him and then I couldn’t. I turned into the bird. I went to the doll maker’s boulder and starred down the hill to the temple. This is my sacred space. My space to become. I sat perched on a tree just above the boulder. I could hear the chanting. I remember the longing, the feeling of being uninvited, uninitiated. I swallowed the feeling and felt it broaden within me. I had a sense for my aura and allowed its themes of light and color to penetrate my being. I came to understand that these themes were at the core of many incarnations with the intention of broadening me and progressing forward on the spiritual path.

“What are these themes?”

The older me was sitting on the boulder above me at Schnebly Hill in Sedona. “A major theme has been self confidence and self esteem.” I was no longer the bird, I was who I am right now.

“How has being a gay man in this life broadened your journey concerning this theme? What have you learned?”

“To be gay is to be different from the norm, which includes your own family. Struggling for equality and self expression on such a core level forced me to think about my own worthiness, and questioning worthiness brought me to a place of asking for God’s help and questioning the nature of God. I came to realize that if God thought I was worthy, then I truly was worthy. This began the journey of self development and self esteem.”

“And healing. Where did it lead you?”

“To another theme that was always there, but sometimes is hidden. This theme had to do with leadership. I often found myself in a group situation taking orders, yet thinking about a better way. Sometimes I was silent. At other times I gave my ideas away, most of them half baked, and let others take the credit. In this life I had an opportunity to taste leadership by being in a leadership role. I didn’t like the feeling of it, I didn’t like the power or the administrative poop that came with it. I came to realize that I had a choice, and the choice was quite simple. I do not have to be in a leadership role if I choose not to be. I do, however, need to be a situational leader when it is appropriate. By this I mean, if I have a better way I need to take the time to think it through and influence the people in power that are around me. The key learning here is influence, and doing it in a way that is not confrontational.”

“And in the end there is benefit that exceeds the self.”

“Of course,” I looked at the older me and we laughed. “We do think alike, don’t we?”

“Hmmm,” the older me continued to laugh with a hideous stare.

“Why are these flashes from the past so sparse and incomplete?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, the doll maker for example. I don’t even know his name.”

Suddenly the doll maker was sitting on the boulder above me. “Do you really want to know my name?” He cocked his head coyly. “Do you really want to know about my life, my losses, my hardships, my illnesses, my regrets?”

I became tense and could feel my back arch. I took a deep breath and with an exhale released the tension. “I’d rather know about your hopes, aspirations, and most importantly what you learned in this life.”

I turned into the bird. I had thoughts about this man levitating. I remembered a recent dream about levitating, wondering not so much about the possibility but about the practical application. Why would anyone aspire to do this? In the dream I became the doll maker. There was a sense of power and control. He could levitate, but not always at will. Curtains came as though I were watching a play and they shut closed. I realized that pursuing such behavior could either make you a heretic, an outcast, someone to be feared; or it could make you a person to be revered. It didn’t make sense to risk these consequences.

“It’s a package deal,” the older me was looking down at me again. “You can’t just pick what you want to remember. It comes at you. And what comes at you is not always true. Remember, truth and thought are intertwined. You may have a memory, and over the years attached emotion to it, and when you play it back it is very different from what actually happened.”

“Back at actuality again.” I returned to the 35 year old body and stretched out in the sun. “Not remembering is a gift, isn’t it?”

“Oh yes. Think about how difficult it would be to live this life if you remembered all the details that came before it. The emotion attached to those memories would be tormenting, and could paralyze you, prevent you from moving on.”

“That begins to explain the mystery of autism, doesn’t it? There are also links to schizophrenia, right?”

The older me turned into the bird.

“That’s my next life. I visualize studying and exploring the spiritual aspects of who we are from a psychological perspective. This was my desire a few years ago, but the timing was not right. I was not ready. The next life will provide opportunity and the time it takes to establish credibility.” I looked him in the eye, seeking validation. “I will have a PhD by the time I am 25.” I could feel my eyebrows rise, and was surprised at the passion that bubbled within me from these words.

The bird didn’t speak but I had a sense that he was on the same page. I could hear his thoughts. “Continue visualizing,” I imagined him nodding as I studied the bird.

I decided to change the subject. “So how do you balance the desire to know about your past with the need to know? How do you control it?”

“Control,” the bird was the older me again. “Isn’t exactly the state you want. First there will be an inspiration. Inspiration may taste like desire, but it’s not as sweet.” I noticed that when the bird turned into the older me he was older than the last time. His moustache was totally white.

“Tell me more about inspiration.”

“Let’s say one has a sexual desire, a fetish. And this fetish is pursued again and again, year after year, until one day this individual wonders why he is participating in this behavior because it isn’t as fulfilling as it had been. He suddenly becomes inspired to change the behavior, but he can’t because he has this underlying desire. He thinks about his behavior. He thinks about his desire. His thinking fires the inspiration even more, and he finds that he has flashes of memory that bring him to certain realizations about his desire. These memories have an element of psychic pain, and it’s important that he manage this pain. Remembering too much can be debilitating. Remembering just enough opens the door to changing behavior.”

“How did we jump to theoretical? We are talking me here.” I studied the older me’s face and realized that it was significantly different from the other older me, and it wasn’t that this older me was a few years older. Actually, in studying his face I realized that he was even younger looking than I am now. This man was the future me.

“Awhile ago you were talking autism and schizophrenia.” The man smiled. There were remnants of my smile in his. “Let me finish my point and then we will go back to you.”

“Go ahead.”

“Once inspiration triggers a memory we wallow for awhile in emotion. It is bittersweet. We use the bitter and the sweet to manage our anger. Think of the analogy of the pool of water that is still. A pebble makes ripples. Think of the pebble as your emotion. Let it fall and wait for the stillness to return. When it returns your mind is clear and you transition from affect to cognition. Cognition brings you to a place of logical thought and reasoning, which gives you permission to open the door for more memories and eventually changed behavior.”

“You’re cute,” I intentionally flirted with the older me, somehow knowing he wouldn’t be shocked. My intention wasn’t really to flirt with him, but to inspire him to move from the theoretical to the personal.

“Perhaps I am cuter,” he smiled broadly. “But neither of us have ever cared much for cute,” He gave me a nonchalant wink.

“I could never wink,” I said hiding my surprise at his controlled reaction.

“Let’s do some creative visualization,” the older me said closing his eyes. “We are going to imagine a boat. Close your eyes and work with me on this visualization. Our boat is a sloop and we are sailing on the Hudson River. There are mountains in the distance and familiar shores all around us. I am sitting beside you in the boat. I am the future you, but you, you now, control me with a combination of your thoughts, behavior and emotion. Allow your mind to come to a place of realization that now is all that truly is. Now controls the future as well as the past. All is fluid. All is in motion.

Now is like a boat on an endless river. There is no starting point and no end. We are everywhere on the river at the same time. Are you with me?"

"Yes."

"Open your eyes."

I opened my eyes and I was alone in the boat, but the future me's voice was still in my head. He told me to look down at the water. I looked down with a confident smile and saw a reflection of faces. "Think of this as an interview," the future me's voice was clear in my head. "Each of these reflections is you, and you have two questions to ask. The first question is 'How is God part of you? When and how have you experienced this integration?' The second question is 'How are you separate from God? When and how have you experienced this separation?'"

In front of me were three shadowy faces floating on the surface of the water. One was the doll maker, another was a boy, and the third was the face of a heavy set middle aged man.

I decided to work with the doll maker as I felt closer to him. I stared at his face in the water. The expression was still and his mouth was open as though he were about to speak. Suddenly he was sitting beside me on the boat. I asked him the first question.

"God is within me when I am making puppets and dolls. God inspires me and I create. When I am not in a state of worry or concern, when I am performing, I am at peace. Integration happens when I am confident in my ability and use it to bring joy to others." The doll maker tilted his head and looked at me. "Just look at their eyes," He smiled and I closed my eyes quickly. In that instant I saw smiling, laughing faces; children, men and women enjoying themselves.

From the corner of my eye I could see a new face in the water, someone I hadn't known about before. He was a dancer. I decided to stay focused on the doll maker. I asked him the second question.

The doll maker handed me a wooden doll with broomstick hair. "This is not real." The old man held my hand. "I want her to be real, but I do not have that power. God has the power, not me. God defines reality and non reality, not me. Although," he hesitated and studied my eyes. "I am the one that helps clarify reality by facilitating possibility. I am like a filter, a lens, and sometimes I allow the lens to become polluted and cloudy."

"Can you give me an example, a picture perhaps of when you have felt separated from God?"

"Politics," the doll maker bowed his head. "And violence." The doll maker continued. "Puppets do what we want them to do. There were times when I allowed myself to be a puppet."

"Give me a picture," I looked in the doll maker's eyes and suddenly I was standing outside a shop in Leon studying 2 puppets hanging in a window. I was in this life, now, and 55 years old. The puppets were beautiful creations and I wanted to touch them, hold them. Standing there I envisioned a dialogue and a performance. There was passion and there was sadness. I looked again into the doll makers eyes. "This isn't the right picture." I said coldly, suddenly realizing how harsh and insensitive I was.

The old man nodded his head. There was a laughing young man and a comical old lady bouncing from a wooden platform with strings above them. The lady was silly but cultured, demanding the young man protect her. The young man laughed and poked at her silly hat. Then came witches and devils, marching stupidly on the other end of the wooden platform. The thought of war suddenly popped into my head. I started to question when and where and my questioning was overcome by an odd mix of excitement, dread and realization. Destruction and war are wrong. I had a sense that the doll maker always knew that, always felt it in his heart. The puppets were suddenly gone and there were no pictures in my head. The doll maker was still nodding with half a smile. I looked away and when I looked back he was gone.

I leaned back in the boat and enjoyed the sun, occasionally glancing at the reflection of faces in the water. There was one face in particular that

intrigued me. At times when I glanced into the water he was a boy, and at other times he was a grown man, a priest. I thought about them, knowing they were the same person. I wondered what approach I should use in interviewing the boy. I couldn't use the same approach. After a short while I invited the boy onto the boat.

"Who are you?" I asked him as though we were both lost.

"I am the captain's boy. I mop the deck"

"Let's play a game with our imagination. We will both close our eyes and I will ask you to create a picture in your mind. One picture will have to do with being happy and content, and feeling close to God. The other will have to do with feeling separated from God, with feeling isolated and alone."

"Ok." The kid shrugged. He was dirty and smelled like fish. "I don't know how to do this."

"Just allow a picture to come into your mind. Don't try to control it. Now close your eyes and get comfortable." I leaned back in the sun and closed my eyes. "Start where you want to, happy, sad, whatever." I could hear him shuffling and changing position. "We don't have to talk about what you see. Just give me a picture."

I am a boy in a village square. There is a church in front of me. I am alone. I am scared. Suddenly I not only have pictures, I have sound and other sensory impressions. I am flooded with feeling for each of the images surrounding me. There are people all around, strangers, and they are selling and buying all kinds of things. No one seems to notice me. No one cares about me. I have been abandoned. Why did she leave me here? What will happen to me now? In fear I retreat within myself and I float above the square, above the church, and when I come back down I am in the church. There are two women in front of me. I float above them looking down. I know them. I don't know them. I am outside the church begging. I am hungry. I am alone. I am standing at a dock. It is cold. There is one of the women from the church. She is selling something. I smell bread. Suddenly I am sleeping on a floor and there is a rocking motion. I am on a boat. The captain is fully

clothed and lying behind me. His hand is on my behind and he is fingering me. My pants come down and he penetrates me. I love him. I hate him. I beg him. They call me boy on the boat. I see mountains. I see water. And then I am feeling too old to be the boy. And then here is another boy. I am back in the church. I am praying. There is light all around me. There is love.

I am back in the boat. There is a troubled face in the water. He is pudgy with a remote look in his eye. I know this face was me, was that boy. He is eager to get on the boat beside me. I think he wants to meet the boy, but no it is not the boy he wants to meet, it is the priest that he becomes.

This man is penetrating my consciousness. I feel unclean and unworthy. It is an unworthiness that brings me to a place of total despair, of hopelessness.

"You killed her," the fat man was suddenly on the boat and staring me in the eye.

"I've never killed anyone," I looked him square in the eye and found comfort in the tense energy in my jaw. I felt strong, self centered, confident.

"We killed her," the fat man's eyes were wet and I could see a track of dry tears descending from each eye.

My self confidence escaped like the air from a balloon and the dream I had when I was thirty five came at me all once. I was on a beach in Frederiksted, St Croix. I was standing in water to my knees, struggling to close a chest that I was about to push out to sea. The chest was filled with jewelry, hats, chains, rings, and boots. Each of them had a special significance. I didn't want to touch any of them. I wanted to slam the trunk shut and with all my energy push it out to sea and be done with it forever.

"The significance," the fat man whispered. "Has to do with what you associate with each object."

"Like feeling guilty perhaps? Like maybe you stole these things." I gave him a defensive look and found myself back in the boat.

“Well,” the fat man tried to look into my eyes but I would not let him.

I looked down instead of looking at the fat man. I did not want to believe that he was part of me. Suddenly I was the boy, lying helpless while the smelly captain abused me. Then I was back on the boat, looking with disgust at the fat man. There was a haughtiness about him.

“The question you need to answer is how to balance physical desire and spiritual evolution.”

“You mean the memory of physical desire and how it plays out as spiritual evolution,” I looked him squarely in the eye. “Or devolution.”

“I suppose,” the fat man frowned and bowed his head like a mischievous little boy. “I didn’t mean to kill her.” He leaned toward me with a gaudy necklace. It smelled like hardened chicken fat.

“But you did,” I said aware that the necklace was now around my neck. I could feel him, us, on top of this woman who begged us to stop. I could feel the necklace penetrating the exposed skin on my neck.

“You raped her,” I looked him in the eye again.

“We raped her,” he corrected and I remembered waking up from the dream. I felt fat and selfish. I sat on the couch in Greenburgh New York and for a few moments I did not know who I was. No matter who I was, I was feeling totally unworthy. Suddenly it was important that I remember I was a Rosicrucian. An important initiation was coming up. I would have to cancel it. I would have to drop out of the order. I was not worthy.

“I never raped a woman,” I remember saying aloud as I sat on the couch with a glass of brandy, my hand shaking. “I am a gay man. Why would a gay man rape a woman?”

I could feel the woman exhale her last breath. I could smell my own breath. It smelled foul, like old meat. I remembered that I was not fat, and yet I

felt fat. I could feel myself on top of this silent, motionless being. She was no longer here. Where did she go?

“Our father who art in heaven,” the fat man was in a confessional and the boy from the village square and boat was now a priest. The confessional was bright and it felt like being under a street light. The priest was elderly but he wore the boy’s smile. His voice was calm and soothing. “Tell me,” he said after completing the Lord’s Prayer. “In this life, when and how has God been a part of you?”

The fat man did not speak.

“Give me a picture,” the priest broke the silence.

The fat man struggled with mental pictures. The image of the dead woman’s face, her open mouth, her still and piercing stare were ever present. He could not let it go. On occasion the dead woman’s face would zoom out and another image would come into focus. There are children playing, a blind man in the street, then an unforgiving zoom in on one eye and then the other. It was almost as though there were a price to pay for letting the picture go.

The priest decided to move on to the second question, but he did not ask it. “I know you are feeling separated from God. Is that true?”

The fat man nodded and started to cry. He continued to remain silent.

“Look at who you will become,” the priest smiled and took his hand. “Forgiveness begins here.” He lifted the fat man’s hand to his heart.

“Forgive me,” the fat man blubbered with his head bowed.

“Look at me,” the priest squeezed the fat man’s hand. “Forgiveness begins with self. You have to forgive yourself before anyone else can forgive you.”

“The darkness,” the fat man began to shiver. “And the cold.” He wrung his



hands together several times. “The separation, yes I know the separation well. I am not alone, but I am alone in spirit. I am with them. I am one of them.”

The fat man was alluding to the entities he attracted between lives, but the priest didn’t get it.

“Was, were,” the priest shook his head. “Will be,” his eyebrows rose. “Find the energy within you, and within them, to transcend. Ask for forgiveness, knowing that you are not just you and the capacity for forgiveness yearns from within.”

“Within me,” the fat man squeezed the priest’s hand. “Within you.”

“You will become me. You are me”

Suddenly I was in the boat, sitting beside a future me. “I thought the boy came first.”

“No. Does it matter?”

“Well yes,” I looked at the handsome man beside me. “And how did he kill her? Who was she?”

The handsome man smiled at me and I knew I should not go there. I had a sense of colonial America moving quickly into the nineteenth century. I was part of a wilderness and the presence of rambling giant trees, and in a snobbish way I was also swirling above the wilderness as though it were an uncivilized waste land. I felt special, privileged, gifted. At the same time I felt that I talked and thought my way into false belief.

“Don’t go there,” the future me shook his head. “You learned that lesson. You don’t need to open that door.”

“Or dance that dance.” I stared at the future me in silence for a moment. I felt like a dancer and I wanted move.

In the water there was a reflection of an open door and a long haired young man pushing his head through. There was silliness about him, an immaturity, and I had the sense that he was easily influenced and led astray. I turned away from his reflection and looked down in the boat. When I looked back he was dancing away.

“Reality is wherever your consciousness is,” the future me stood up and stretched. “And the capacity to control it is within you.” He lifted his arms over his head and joined hands, then leaned toward one side and then the other. “And you are onto something about wanting to move, wanting to dance. Dance is filled with unconscious intention.”

“Emotion sometimes moves me into a consciousness that is not a choice. Movement can carry me away, literally, to place that is closer to choice.”

“And that is a good thing,” the future me winked. “Physically, psychologically and spiritually.”

“Talk to me about emotion, about conscious intention, about choice.”

“Remember your analogy of the hill to describe the state of happiness?”

“I think of it often. The top of the hill is happiness and when you get there, there is no greater happiness.”

“And in fact you can move down the other side of the hill into despair.”

“So what does that have to do with intention?”

“You relate to flow charts. Imagine a box with the words ‘emotion... passion... desire’ in it. From this box is another box with the word ‘thought’ in it. From this box there is a decision box with a question in it. The question is ‘create intention?’ Coming out of the decision box are two lines. One says ‘no’ and the other says ‘yes’. The yes line leads to a box that says ‘develop intention and manage behavior’. The no line leads to a box that says ‘repressed desire – subconscious intention’.

"I need to articulate my desire, and I can't quite put it into words. I think I can express it in the negative, but not the positive."

"Go ahead."

"My core desire at this point in my life is cosmic. To say it in the negative, I do not want to be separate from God. I long for integration, a merging."

"Regardless of the words you use to describe this cosmic desire, which by the way has always been within you in numerous lifetimes at various degrees, you need to manage your behavior. What are you doing to support this desire, this intention? Continue doing it! What are you doing that separates you from God? Stop participating in that behavior! What are you not doing that you could be doing to support this desire? Start doing it!"

All of a sudden I was very conscious of me in this life. My consciousness of this incarnation expanded beyond the now and I was suddenly 19, 35 and 53 all at the same time.

"Hmm," the future me was rubbing his jaw with his hand. "What are the three of you trying to work out in terms of managing behavior? 'Any common themes?'" He smiled and cocked his head.

"Well yeah," I nodded back. "I was trying to answer the question, 'Who am I now?' for three major aspects of my life. The aspects are spirit, sexuality and life work."

"Let's explore them one by one."

"Ok," I shrugged and looked in the water. A 19 year old me shrugged and looked back. He discovers the Rosicrucians and decides not to join. He studies Edgar Casey and discovers his life long teacher and mentor, Edward Carpenter. He's flushing his speed and barbiturates down the toilet. He wonders about being gay. He has several female friends. They conveniently appear as girlfriends to other friends and family. How should he play this? He decides not to pretend. He must face the reality of a gay orientation, but not now. He decides to put that aspect of himself on hold. He needs to

focus on school. He is a writer and has written several books of poetry and short stories. He is majoring in English in College but thinks perhaps this is a waste of time. In an instant he decides he will be an accountant and takes an accounting course in the summer. He returns to school in the fall having decided he is definitely majoring in English. He will be either an English teacher or Journalist. He decides to put that aspect of his life on hold too."

"Find a face in the water that compliments this nineteen year old you."

I look into the water and the dancer springs forward like a ghost and possesses me.

"Be one with him," the future me is calm and deliberate.

"Your choices and your actions were my actions. Your desires are my desires. We are in 1969. Thank you for the inspiration to follow my heart and listen to my head. Thank you for the inspiration to use my head to reason and not fall pray to self deception. Thank you for reminding me of Colonial America, Edgar Allen Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, and for teaching me how to balance head and heart."

"Let him disperse."

The dancer is still within me but not as present. I open my eyes and look at the water. A thirty five year old me is swinging his briefcase and staring back. He has just been promoted and is surprised at his success. What surprises him most is his sense of knowing the right thing to do, and his influence on people. He has been in a joyous committed gay relationship for five years. He just joined the Rosicrucian Order.

"Find a face in the water that compliments the thirty five year old you."

"There are two. One is the boy and one is the pudgy faced man who raped the woman."

"Bring in the boy."



The boy comes over me with a sense of vulnerability. “Thank you for prompting me to protect myself. Thank you for letting me know that I am worthy of God’s love. Thank you for the inspiration to open my heart and love another.”

“Bring in the rapist.”

The rapist possesses me with a tingle. I hesitate for a moment and then find calmness. “I separate you from your behavior. I love you. I abhor your behavior. I forgive you. Thank you for reminding me of what it feels like to be separated from God, and for the inspiration to manage my desire and my behavior.”

“Let the rapist go and focus on the fifty three year old you.”

I saw him in the water. His face was thin and hollow and he was excited and sad. He is depositing checks. He is talking his way into an early retirement package. He is back in graduate school studying psychology. His loving partner of many years is very ill. He feeds him. He takes him for chemotherapy. He stares at his dead body propped up on a chair like a piece of luggage. He longs for another partner but struggles with feelings of being disloyal. He decides that this intention is not disloyal. He is sitting at a computer writing a eulogy. He has completed all the degrees of Rosicrucian study. He is feeling empty, unfulfilled. He is wondering how he can best use the time he has left to fully experience all that he has intended for this incarnation.

“Visit with the doll maker,” the future me looked at the fifty three year old me with compassion.

The doll maker came over me with an intentional loneliness and I was suddenly aware that there was great loss and sadness in his life. “Thank you for the compassion and courage to move on. Thank you for the memory of initiation and the God of our heart and consciousness.”

The future me was standing now. His eyes were wild with excitement and the boat was rocking side to side as though a motor boat had zoomed past

us. “You realize that all of them,” he pointed to the faces in the water. “Are you. And that I am you. And that all of us are merely a reflection of the divine.”

“I do. And I have also come to realize that this actuality, this truth, has radically altered my understanding of consciousness. It isn’t just the truth that all of you are part of me that is so startling, it is the realization that I, we, are an integral part of everything that is not us as well.”

“Can you,” the future me said in a calm voice and sat beside me. “Stop putting so much focus on understanding. Focus on love, for that is divine law, and imagine this actuality anyway you can, then open yourself to experience.”

I looked at the future me with a smile, then glanced at the reflection of faces in the water. I studied each face one by one and closed my eyes. When I opened them we were sitting in a circle on a beach. It was low tide at sunset and there was a fire in the center of our circle. Future me was opposite the fifty three year old me in the circle. There were nine of us. “Close your eyes,” I instructed the group. “Imagine a ray of white light radiating from your heart center and extending from you to the heart center of the person on your left.” I took a deep breath and imagined a ray of white light extending from my heart center to the heart center of the doll maker. I could feel the peaceful, loving energy of the light move from the heart center of the doll maker into the heart center of a thirty five year me, then on to the eight year old Captain’s boy, then future me, then the priest that the boy became, then the pudgy indulgent man who raped the young woman, then the young dancer, then on to an older me in this life and back to me in this current life.

“Hmmm,” we all exhaled confidently in a state of complete peace.

“Allow the God of our imagination, our realization to be ever present in this white light. As the light travels in this circle of soul personalities we welcome its healing properties, its unconditional love, and we are filled with joy and gratitude. Feel this joy from the core of your being and let it build as it moves thru you to the top of your head. Let this joyful, loving energy swirl in your head and imagine it moving down from your head

to your heart center, blending our love with the white light until it is indistinguishable. We are love.

“We are one,” future me continued. “Let us chant. Ra, Ma, aum, aum. Again, Ra Ma, Aum, Aum. Ra, Ma, aum, aum. Ra, Ma, aum, aum.” My eyes opened and future me was studying me with a broad smile. I was studying the spaces between us and became conscious of the souls we resonated with between lives. There were spinning lights around each of us and the white light connecting each of us was now moving thru each of the lights around us, connecting us all. In this connection we gained new identity while at the same time regaining our uniqueness. We became a blending of souls.

Suddenly there were huge circling spheres, globes that seemed to emanate sound as they floated through space. Our lights harmonized with the sound and made beautiful music. I am light and I am self, and yet I am not self as I experience the self of each of these lights. We drift connected, listening to one another’s questions and hearing one another’s thoughts. As we drift we gain a sense that there are other lights connected to us of varying intensities. Some we can reach with our thoughts and others we cannot. As I drift there are lights that transmit a loving hello, and other lights that just keep talking as I drift by. They become like phone calls waiting to be answered. As some call to me, I call to others. “Give yourself permission,” a voice echoed in my head. “And the lights will become faces, just like your meditations. As above, so below.”

I drifted with the lights in a symphony of sounds that were like bells ringing, but deeper and more profound. I saw my mother’s face shrouded in a bubble of lights, and gradually each of the lights around her became a face; some of which I knew and others whom I did not. I smiled at my mother. She smiled back and I continued to drift through a sea of faces. Some made me happy. Some made me sad. As I continued to drift I realized that not all the faces were human. I felt as though I had been swimming and went out too far. I heard a dog bark and then another dog barked. Three gentle soft lights circled me. Each light became a dog’s head for a second and returned to light. Simon. Brewster. Toby. These three lights circled me as I continued to drift with lights and faces that were

not human. A light brighter than myself bumped me. “You’ve been here before.”

“Yes, but when I have been conscious of it I went away.”

“Self consciousness, what a lonely state,” the voice sighed.

I felt like I was nuzzling in with the being that radiated this voice thought. It was like being in a womb. I was comfortable and safe.

“You are inspired to ascend, aren’t you?”

“I am. But ascend to what?”

A hearty but comforting laugh enveloped me.

“I will use your thinking, not mine.”

“Hmm,” I relaxed and was more comfortable than I can ever remember.

“Back in the garden, the Garden of Eden that is, human kind fell from grace. What do you think that was about?”

“It’s not about sin is it?” I felt myself growing restless.

The hearty laugh returned and I became one with it.

“You made a comment about self consciousness being a lonely state. There was and still are beings that do not have a realization of self. This realization of self brings with it a sense of falling, a loss of connectedness, but at the same time it is a blessing. The Garden of Eden is an allegory about realization of self, about self consciousness.”

“And now you have a sense of other consciousness.”

“Well I always did. But it was always remote, far away, hard to get to.”

“Self is a spectrum of consciousness. Think of consciousness as a journey.”

“I do. And when I get lost I focus on God. I think about God. I ask to be embraced in God consciousness.”

“Continue to do that.”

“I will.”

“You know about transition, change. Sometimes a series of things happen to us and it ends a chapter. There is a major shift within us. It is a shift that has to do with realization.”

“Like an initiation. Once you get it you got it and you have a whole new orientation. You never go back.”

“An initiation is coming for you. Time and space will collapse as they are illusions. Life as you know it will be far broadened.”

“I can smell the incense, but it is far away. How do I get closer?”

“Behave in a way that is consistent with your values. Bring people into your life that are consistent with your values. Discover supportive energy. Find harmony. Listen to your heart. Use your head.”

“Head and heart,” I whispered to myself. The theme of balancing head and heart has been with me since I was nineteen. Heart was always easier than head, and the two have always been in conflict. When it comes to passing judgment or making a decision about something, its feeling and not thought that pushes me to an edge.

“It’s ok,” the nurturing voice brought a renewed peace and with it a ringing sound. I felt as though I was in an aircraft flying, and then as though I were sailing in a boat at sunrise. Clusters of lights returned, and again as some lights flickered a face would appear and then disappear. “When you think from your heart, think love.”

“When I am in a meditative state there are experiences that make me afraid. The fear is an end.”

“I won’t tell you not to be afraid,” suddenly it was the voice of future me and we were sailing on the Hudson. “But I will tell you that when this happens you must focus on love. Think love. Be love. If there is reason for you to be afraid the source of your fear will dissipate. If there is no reason for fear you will open a door. Let the door open.”

I turned into the bird and thought about flying away. I also thought about the 7 or 8 times over the past fifteen years that I started to have a profound experience. I remember the conscious thoughts of being ready. I remember too the racing heart and the oncoming fear of the unknown. Ultimately heart gave into head and the experience ended. I did not have the courage to focus on love. I teetered on the edge of the boat, thinking about my choices and still thinking about flying away. What do I have to lose? Suddenly I was sitting up in the boat, studying the water for reflections. There was only one. I felt integrated and open. I looked up and saw that we were reaching land. In the distance were mountains and I realized we were no longer on the Hudson, no longer in the east. I closed my eyes and when I opened them I was lying on the familiar red of Cathedral Rock in Sedona. “It’s a new day,” I said to myself as I stood up. “I am courageous. I am loved. I am love.” I took a deep breath and then exhaled. “I am. I am who I was. I am who I will be.”

consciousness is a lonely place  
for individual souls

spread out like  
christmas lights  
on a decorated tree

each light contributes a karmic glow with specific  
intensity and brightness

each little bulb gleams independently within  
its karmic string,  
until it  
flutters;

burns out

then heads back home to be refurbished

a lonely bulb like me brings with it a cosmic  
desire,  
an inspiration  
to share light  
and continually return to its source with new  
awareness  
until ultimate awareness  
quenches the need to return.

## ESSAY: THREE STAGES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A being either has consciousness or it does not. Our language, however, describes it differently. For example, the word subconscious implies that mental activity is taking place in a part of the mind that is below the level of conscious perception. We are unaware of sub conscious activity, such as the beating of the heart and other bodily functions. We are also unaware of the information that is contained in the subconscious, information about our personality and individual nature. The term pre conscious suggests that the memories and information in the subconscious can be recalled through conscious effort. The word unconscious is sometimes used interchangeably with subconscious, although unconscious is often used to describe a state of total unawareness, such as a coma. Even so, the meaning of these two words remains elusive. Adding to the confusion are terms such as cosmic consciousness and higher consciousness, implying that there are layers and levels of this condition called consciousness.

Consciousness simply defined is awareness. The words we use to describe consciousness are really an attempt to describe the nature and or state of awareness, and that is where the confusion comes in. In addition, we use words and terms to discuss awareness and consciousness from two very different perspectives. One perspective is psychological, and fixed within a current lifetime. Its purpose is to explain and modify thought and behavior, with an end goal of treatment or therapy. Behavior and thought are judged within an environmental and cultural framework. The other perspective is mystical or spiritual, and takes into account prior incarnations and the psychic senses. Its purpose is to better understand the purpose of an incarnation and progress on a spiritual path. Here we come to an ultimate question, is consciousness as an attribute of mind or an attribute of soul?

The mystery of consciousness has at its root the mystery of being. Being is one and yet being is all. This paradigm seems like a riddle, a confusing contradiction. How can the experience and expression of self be part of the experience and expression of all? If the paradigm is true, then consciousness is an attribute of soul, and as a consequence it must also be an attribute of mind. Consciousness as an attribute of mind is the perspective of

psychology, consciousness as an attribute of soul is the perspective of the mystic. Both perspectives are important, and their value depends upon why one is exploring the nature of consciousness and how one intends to use the results that come from the inquiry.

Consciousness is a state of awareness; awareness of existence, thought, and feeling. The attributes of this state are imagination, knowledge, and volition.

There are three core stages of this awareness, as well as numerous sub divisions or nuances. Following are thoughts about the three core stages of consciousness.

### Self Conscious

What is the purpose of self consciousness? If there are stages of consciousness, if consciousness can be thought of as a continuum, then perhaps the purpose or opportunity of self consciousness is learning, growth and integration. Human development begins at birth. Put aside physical development for a moment and contemplate psychic development. We are continually becoming. The challenges and opportunities we have in the development process have to do with the process of defining 'Who Am I Now'?

Who we are now or who we are becoming is something we may not like to think about. We have limited control over our environment and the people in our lives. We can choose certain things, but sometimes things just seem to happen to us and we don't understand why. Regardless of what or why things happen to us, we have feelings about them. The feelings are not always positive and so we repress some of our experiences.

Think of subconscious as a doorway to the unknown. It is a doorway that leads to discovery of self as well as discovery of other and higher consciousness. The subconscious provides opportunity to integrate 'Who am I now?' with 'Who was I?' and 'Who will I become?'

Sometimes we knock on the door of the subconscious and no one answers. At other times we are flooded with memories and feelings that seem to

come at us from out of nowhere. The subconscious speaks to us in dreams, in symbols. It also bubbles up as an intuitive impulse to respond or behave in a way that was not thought through or planned.

Think of the discovery that comes to us from the subconscious as a gift. It occurs whenever we are ready. Take the gift and imagine, with the knowledge that came with it, who you *want* to become. Make decisions and take action to become who you imagine yourself to be.

### Shared Conscious

We are tribal by nature. We like to belong. Most of us have a preference for sharing elements of our life with others, rather than living in solitude. How much we share and who we share with varies from situation to situation and person to person, but still the majority of us have a preference to share various aspects of our lives. The more we work and share with others, the greater our ability to experience empathy. Empathy allows us to understand another person's situation, feelings and motives.

Empathy is an opportunity to open your heart. It allows us to imagine what it would be like to be in another person's shoes, to gain an understanding of their perspective, their point of view. In essence, it allows us to experience an aspect of their self, their reality, their consciousness. The opportunity to open our hearts also allows us to share our consciousness, to let others know what it is like to be in our situation, to feel what we are feeling, to understanding our motives.

We share by talking. However, there are other ways that we share. When someone communicates with us about their situation, point of view or perspective, we can *imagine* what it is like to be in their shoes. To *imagine* is the first step in obtaining shared consciousness. When we interact with others we share what we imagine and either obtain validation or imagine something else. When we obtain validation, the other person has touched our heart. The gift that we obtain from this shared consciousness is a new perspective, a new understanding, new knowledge, a broadened self consciousness. As a consequence we make better decisions, as our decisions consider the impact on others.

Shared consciousness is sometimes experienced as synergy. It is the combined action and result of a group of people working together. The result of shared consciousness can be physical, or it can be mental. A group of people can share a meditation or visualization, and send their collective thoughts into the universe.

Shared consciousness need not be focused exclusively on the people in our physical environment. We can also seek attunement and communion with beings beyond our physical world. In the cosmic realm there are numerous nuances or levels of consciousness.

### Cosmic Conscious

The idea of cosmic consciousness implies consciousness of the cosmos, knowing the life and order of the universe, continually imagining and using volition to create. Is it possible for a human to experience this stage of consciousness? Spiritual people throughout history, and in our current day, claim that they have experienced cosmic consciousness. It is usually described as a sudden flash or realization accompanied by a profound peace and a profound understanding of the universe.

Our species can touch upon this consciousness, but it cannot be sustained. It cannot be a permanent state. As long as we are a soul possessed of a body we will at some point return to self consciousness. Great mystics and spiritual leaders describe cosmic consciousness as a condition unbounded by space and time. In a self conscious state this condition is incomprehensible. How can one describe what cannot be comprehended? The point here is that any illumination we receive when attaining cosmic consciousness is interpreted by the self in an attempt to explain and integrate the experience. The interpretation may not be truth. In fact, the interpretation can be so far from truth that it can cause psychological damage.

Cosmic consciousness is typically described as an ultimate experience, but does it have to be ultimate? Does it have to carry with it the attributes of profound knowledge and profound peace? Can we experience just a slice? These are questions for the individual self, the ego, and its intention.

## EXPERIMENT: EXPANDING CONSCIOUS AWARENESS

### Self Consciousness

*Technique to help define, 'Who Am I Now' and 'Who Do I Want to Become'*

1. Spend time in contemplation. Think about the events in your life. How have you changed because of them? What do you want to do about it? What can you do about it?
2. If you are confused, don't understand something, or if you are seeking direction or knowledge, ask the cosmic for help. Know that the answer or help may come to you at unexpected times. If you are ready, intuitive impulses may suddenly come to you. If it is too emotional or distant you may receive elements of what you seek in a dream or meditation.
3. Listen to what comes to you in meditation and dreams. Keep a journal. You are the director, producer and every actor in the dreams you have. You are also every object in your dreams. When a dream is startling or profound, imagine yourself as each person, object or thing in the dream. What are you feeling when you are this person or object? What does the feeling tell you? What does it mean?
4. Contemplate 'Who Am I Now' and 'Who Do I Want to Become'.
5. Use visualization techniques to create new realities.
6. Examine your behavior. What are you doing that supports who you want to become? Are there conflicts between what you think or say and what you do? Create a plan to modify your behavior.



## Shared Consciousness

*Technique to experience greater shared consciousness*

1. Seek opportunities to experience synergy. These opportunities may come about in work in terms of a team project, or come about to initiate or improve something in the community. The key is to find something that you are passionate about, and seek others who share the same passion. As a group you can develop a common goal, and work together to achieve that goal.
2. Participate in group meditations, and spiritual retreats and workshops.
3. Prior to meditation, ask for assistance from the cosmic to attract beings of like mind.
  - a. Plan to open your meditation with a specific idea or theme. Themes might include topics such as world peace, love of God, love of nature, love of all men and women, love of animals, etc.
  - b. Imagine you are a ball of light in the night sky. Visualize other balls of light as you drift in space.
  - c. Focus on your chosen theme as you visualize drifting in space. Open your heart to the feelings that come to you from within about this theme. Imagine your thoughts and feelings radiating outward as beams of light, extending to other light sources in the night sky.
  - d. Seek communion by opening your heart to receiving thoughts and feelings. As feelings and thoughts come to you, imagine yourself moving toward the source of light. Should you find it, allow yourself to drift with it in harmony. Together, seek additional sources of light.

## Cosmic Consciousness

*Technique to gain awareness of higher consciousness*

1. Take an inventory of impressions that have come to you in your lifetime. If you keep a journal, review it and identify impressions that are profound or startling. These impressions may be odd dreams, memories that may seem disconnected with this life, feelings that come over you when you are in a certain environment or location, or even when you hold or feel a material object.
2. Search for new impressions in meditation. Bring yourself to a public place such as a town square or church. Don't try to actively imagine a place, try to keep your mind open and see what comes to you.
3. Search for new impressions by bringing yourself to a place of celebration, such a birthday, wedding, initiation or ceremony of some kind. Don't actively try to remember an event, try to keep your mind open and see what comes to you. Do not immediately dismiss events from this life; float with these memories to see if they bring any additional memories.
4. Analyze the impressions.
  - a. Are they connected in some obvious way to this life?
  - b. Are they connected in some hidden way to this life? (subconscious realizations, repressions)
5. Bring yourself to a state of now to extract meaning for those impressions that seem disconnected to this life. Imagine the impression as a dream you are trying to recall. Follow your imagination. Where does it take you? How do feel about where this imagination takes you? How would you describe the feelings that come about? What do the feelings mean?

## MY EVOLVING CREED: CONSCIOUSNESS

1. I believe there is a distinction between reality and actuality
2. I believe that reality is the law and order of consciousness – a realization of individual mind that is ever evolving
3. I believe that actuality is the law and order of vibration – the realization of spiritual truth and ultimate consciousness
4. I believe that each of us are on a journey from reality to actuality, from self to all
5. I believe this journey is the intention of consciousness
6. I believe that although each of us may be at different levels of understanding on this journey, that we are bound as a species to a common state of conscious awareness
7. I believe that humanity is evolving to another level of consciousness

## Cluster 4:

## *Truth & Consequences*



## SUMMARY OF CLUSTER 4: TRUTH & CONSEQUENCES

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- Ritual on the Mountain* 138  
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I am a ball of light rolling along on a celestial highway,  
an ever evolving soul personality  
resting at temporary destinations  
soliciting an invisible karmic ticket  
that only sometimes I can see

Me, I travel with a cluster of lights  
some near some not too far distant  
some brighter some not as bright  
drifting into one another  
sharing light  
our invisible karmic tickets automatically updated

Other clusters  
dance all around us  
and their tickets,  
well, they automatically update my ticket too

## JOHARI AND THE JESUS WINDOW OF KARMIC INSIGHT

I was working with a team on a practice crucifixion. It was very frustrating, and no one seemed to understand. I tied a man to a cross, but the cross was on the ground. I asked the man lying down to imagine it in the sky. The facilitator called time and everyone stopped to listen.

“There are four degrees of karmic awareness. The first is known. This is karma that you can link to a specific behavior. The second is blind. This is karma that you cannot link to any specific behavior, but others around you can because they have been impacted by your actions. The third is hidden. This is karma that you know about but you avoid. This karma can become your personal drama and you act it out again and again. The fourth is unknown. This is collective karma that can be linked to your specific behavior from a species or evolutionary perspective.”

The good looking Jesus looked up at me. “What we need to figure out is the level of awareness that brings us personally to a crucifixion.” He leaned forward. “My name is Jo,” he said releasing his hands from the rope and struggled to sit up. “Good thing we are working with rope and not nails.” He extended his hand and we shook.

Behind us is another man. He is observing us and taking notes. His name is Hari. “Jo has a point. Discovering our own personal crucifixion is what each of us should be striving to achieve. When we allow ourselves to identify that personal crucifixion we open ourselves to find out what we need to do to let it go. Sometimes we are done but we cannot let go. Sometimes we think we are done and go on our merry way, only to find out that we are not done.”

“Yes,” I shook my head and extended my arm to shake his hand. “Mike,” I shook Hari’s hand. “I like that thought. What I would like to do is select an element of karma to work with, and then move forward to identify where I am in that realm of personal crucifixion so that I can figure out the best next step, assuming there is one.”

“Good.” Both Hari and Jo shook their heads.

“I think the fourth type of karma would be the easiest way to start.” I said studying the four types that the facilitator had bulleted on a flipchart.

“Let’s go for it,” Jo said coiling the rope that had fallen to the floor. “Mike, you play Jesus and let Hari talk you through. I will be the observer this time.”

“Good.” I nodded enthusiastically and straightened the crucifix, then positioned myself over it and spread my arms.”

“Relax,” Hari’s voice was deep and soothing and I could hear him uncoiling the rope.

“We don’t need to do that part of the simulation. The cross is enough stimulus to bring me to the right emotional place.”

“Good enough,” Hari said with an English accent. He sounded British but he looked Indian. He crossed one leg over the other in a yoga position and held his hand over my heart. “Close your eyes. Relax. Bring yourself to a state of peace and openness.”

I did as Hari instructed and allowed my breathing to adjust to an appropriate rhythm. Hari was silent for a few moments while I did this.

“Imagine yourself in the presence of Jesus,” he continued. He is a glorious light above you. His presence is broad and expands around and beneath you. Allow his presence to penetrate and become you.”

My breathing is inspired by the energy coming from the hand that Hari holds above me. The pace becomes slower. I visualize the light and allow it to become me. My breathing becomes an even rhythm.

“Think now about Christ consciousness. Your every desire at this moment is to achieve that state. Take a moment to wallow in that desire.”

My mind takes an intellectual detour and I ponder the meaning of Christ consciousness. How might a Christian define this experience? How might a neo new age westerner define this experience? I conclude that both would carry themes of forgiveness along with themes of transcendence.

“There are times when our desires and our actions,” Hari took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. “Inhibit or restrict our Christ conscious experience,” he continued. “You are in search of these karmic restrictions. Work with the Christ of your heart, the Jesus of your imagination, to identify those restrictions so that you can pursue them to fruition.”

My mind was rambling now. I wasn’t sure how to do this search. How to think about it. My breathing changed and Hari noticed it.

“Stay with me,” he moved his hand from above my heart to above my feet and then above my head. I could feel the flow of energy move from head to foot and it inspired a new peace.

“Imagine a crystal ball,” he inhaled and held his breath for a moment and then exhaled. “Formulate a question concerning collective karma.”

Thoughts danced in my head and Hari was silent while I allowed the thoughts to formulate words and eventually a question. The crystal ball appeared and disappeared several times. Suddenly it was there again and contained my question: What collective karma instigates this soul and encourages change? Is there a word or image here in the crystal ball that will develop a greater awareness within me?

I could feel Hari’s smile and encouragement. “Give it time to formulate,” his voice was soft and determined. “Feel the question with your heart,” he continued. “See the question remain in the crystal ball until the answer comes.”

“Food!” I sat up panting. “The word food came up in the crystal ball. What could that mean?”

Jo laughed loudly while he was writing. “Could be that you are hungry. How about we take a break for lunch?”

## RITUAL ON THE MOUNTAIN

I could not see myself, nor could I clearly see the faces of others. It all began in an open place that was semi lit with torches. Huge boulders of various sizes littered the area. Shadows of people collected around the boulders. At first I thought they were monkeys or apes. They did not seem like people, or at least not like people I knew. They were lighting candles. In the glow of candle light I could see human faces. Some were mumbling, but most were silent with their mouths hung open as though they were in a trance.

I stood proudly in the center of this place, gazing approvingly and nodding as I studied each group and then moved on to the next. When I was done I quickly counted the number of groups. There were ten. I needed two more to begin the ritual. I remained in the center of the group and focused on the barely visible mountains that surrounded us. I opened my heart to the clean and powerful energy in this place, and imagined a radiance overcoming me from within and projecting itself outward like a halo. I felt blessed and holy.

There was a stick or pole of some sort in my right hand. I held it firmly and closed my eyes, then surrendered to the feeling of power and contentment that emanated from the mountains and the earth around me. When I opened my eyes it was early dawn and the sun was beginning to rise. A new group announced itself with a candle on my left, and then another candle glow to my right signaled for me that there were now twelve groups and the ceremony could begin.

I held the pole in the air and took a step forward. The people knew from this signal that it was time to select one person from their group and prepare them for the ritual that was about to begin. I began a silent prayer as they adorned their selected member with apron and head dress. The prayer was an automatic chant, sort of like a child quickly spilling forth the Lord's prayer. It was as though if I didn't say it quickly, I would not know what to say. I surrendered and let the words spill out of me. I paid close attention to the words that automatically came out, as though I were listening to another person speak. Most of the prayer had to do with themes of peace, thanksgiving and being blessed, but there were also themes of sacrifice and renewed energy. Although I did not understand what I was saying, I

was confident and peaceful with the ritual aspect of what I was doing. As I finished the prayer a sense of reverence came over me. I held in this feeling of reverence with a deep inhale, and in my exhale offered this reverence to the mountains that surrounded us.

I was silent for a moment as I scanned the twelve groups of people. Each group had one person adorned in apron and headdress. I tapped the pole to the ground three times and the chosen from each group came forward. They assembled before me, their heads bowed and their palms together pointing toward the ground. Most of them were adolescents, but there were also two adults and two old men.

"The gift of life is the gift of love," I smile and nod and the group of twelve forms a circle around me. As I continue to speak the circle that surrounds me rotates counter clock wise. "A circle of light without beginning and without end embraces the heaven, earth and the underworlds in between." I close my eyes. "The breath of life permeates the flesh and animates the soul. The flesh contains the essence, the energy, the power of the Almighty."

The circle stops and a young woman is standing before me. "Are you ready to receive the gift?" I ask her.

"Yes," the young woman steps forward and allows her hands to drop to her side. Her head is still bowed. I want to look into her eyes but I have the sense that it is not appropriate and I refrain. I tap the pole and she returns to the circle. The circle moves in a clockwise direction and an older man steps forward.

"Are you ready to receive the gift?"

"Yes," the man lets his arms dangle to his side and his head is bowed. Again I tap the pole, he returns to the circle, and the circle rotates once again. This continues until all twelve have agreed to accept the gift.

I take a deep breath and anticipate earth energy, and as the air fills my lungs the energy moves from the bottom of my feet to the top of my head. I close my eyes and open them. All in the circle hold hands and close their eyes. I

can feel them surrender their power to me. I am elated, dizzy, bigger than myself.

“And now we begin our journey up the mountain,” I speak with a calm and smooth exhale. “Who will lead us to the sacred site?”

The older man steps forward and the others form a single line behind him. I join as the last in the line. We move forward on a path that narrows quickly as it begins a circular ascent. There is calmness about me, and a confidence that I feel I have earned but I do not remember. It is an odd mix of feelings, of knowing and not knowing at the same time. I surrender to this intuitive knowing, aware that if I do not surrender I will not be able to lead this group. In addition, I will never find out what this sacrifice is truly about. I must continue. As we approach the top of the mountain I can see a stone temple, and there is a sound of drums in the distance. It is hot as we continue our hike in the bright sun. I feel like I have a sheet over my head, but I know it is some kind of headdress. A string of beads adorns the right side of my head, and when I look down it swings before my eyes. Just as I am beginning to perspire and become uncomfortable with the heat, a soothing wind moves down the mountain.

We reach the top of the mountain and one by one the twelve stop walking and form a single line. The drums are pounding but there is no one in sight. I take my place at the front of the line. The temple is about fifty feet in front of us. It looks like an old stone church. I tap my pole to the earth and beginning walking, the others following behind. As we approach the temple the drumming gets louder and we are greeted with an aroma of earthy incense. The temple has no doors, only small cave like openings that are just large enough to enter. Standing in one of these open spaces is a man with a colorful headdress of feathers and beads. His face and chest are painted with red lines. We approach him and enter the temple. The drumming stops. It is smoky with a heavy smell of incense. Beneath the heavy smell is something foul. It assaults my nostrils and I try not to think about it. Instead I focus on the ritual, waiting for intuition to tell me what to do.

We are standing in a large open area with little light. In each corner are three men, each with a drum hanging from his neck. They are still and

silent now. Behind us is a raised area with several small open doorways that are brighter than where we are standing. There are flames or candles of some sort on the other side. I tap my pole and the group forms a circle around me. I nod to the priest with the colorful headdress. He brings me a bowl of water and disappears. I drink from the bowl and intentionally let the water drool to my chest. As I pass the bowl to the person on my right the drumming begins. There is a distinct bang as the person to my right drinks and drools as I did. He passes the bowl on until all have had a drink and drool, each one preceded by a distinct bang. There is silence for a moment and the priest appears carrying a large pot. Behind him is a boy carrying a ball of smoke from a short chain. The priest places the bowl in the center of the room and the boy swings the ball of smoke over it. The foul smell again finds its way to my nostrils, immediately followed by musty and earthy incense. Again I try not to think about the foul odor. The priest picks up something from the floor. It looks like a broom. He gently dips it in the large bowl and approaches me, then slashes me across the chest with it to make a broad red line. As he does this a drummer in one corner of the room pounds a staccato beat. Afterward there is silence and the boy waves the smoking ball a few inches from my face. As they leave and move on to the next person in the circle, a single odor finds its way to my nostrils and reminds me of a hospital. I watch as the priest continues to slash each person in the circle.

When the priest and boy are done we again form a single line. He is at the head of the line with the boy beside him and I am at the end. The drummers tap gently and slowly on their drums. The priest leads us to the raised area where there is a doorway. It is much brighter than where I am standing. Suddenly the calmness that consumed me is replaced with suspicion. The smell becomes more overpowering. My heart begins to race. As I grow closer and closer to the arched doorway my breathing becomes more and more intense, until finally I am panting. On the other side of the doorway is an altar. On the altar is a long, rectangular box. I want to run but I also need to know what is in the box. Members of our circle are standing around it. They appear to be eating.

“Oh my God,” I close my eyes as I approach the box on the altar. My heart is beating so fast it feels as though it will explode from my chest. Inside the

box is a man. His chest is sliced and diced. The people from the circle are eating him. I turn and push the person beside me out of the way and exit the church.

"It is the king," the priest grabs my arm as I struggle to catch my breath outside the temple.

"I can't participate in this," I reach for his hand and throw it from me.

"Eating the flesh of the king will make you strong; will give you some of his power."

"If you believe that," I said ripping the sheet from my head. "I don't do cannibal."

"You know we are not cannibals," he smiled and took my hand. There was something feminine about him at that moment. "This is a special, sacrificial offering."

"No," I pulled away from him. "No." I wiped off the blood on my chest with the sheet and rolled it into a ball.

He reached up and his forefinger touched a spot on my forehead between my eyes. "A memory," he said softly as he tilted his head. His eyebrows rose toward the sky and he smiled.

I smiled back and handed him the sheet, then began my way down the mountain. Half way down was an open cave. I sat there for awhile with my eyes closed and thought about what had happened, and then the memory came. It was early morning and I was lying in a hotel bed in Oakland California. I had been meditating to music. The meditation ended and the music stopped. Just as I reached to remove the headphones a voice whispered loudly in the center of my head. "You live on a planet that eats the animals." I remember the feeling that came over me at that instant. It was one of disgust, then defensive denial, then sadness. As the feeling matured there was a helplessness that consumed me, and then a growing acceptance.

I opened my eyes and could see the priest a few feet ahead. He took off the head dress and placed it on the ground, then looked straight ahead at me. He knew I was watching him. He shook out the sheet I left with him, folded it, and placed it on the ground beside the head dress. Then he took off his sheet and stood there naked, letting it flap in the breeze. He let it go and it landed over the head dress and the other sheet. He folded his arms and studied me as though I were part of an audience and he was about to perform. He did a silly dance around the objects on the ground, and then lifted the sheet like a proud magician. He reached down and pulled up a pair of shorts, then another object, and then another. He put on the shorts, placed the sheet over his shoulder, and walked toward me. As he approached I could see he was carrying sandals and a baseball cap. He stood in front of me and placed the cap on his head. "What happened after that thought of disgust, do you remember?"

I stood up and brushed the dirt from my behind. The priest spread the sheet on the ground and we both sat. "I thought I could control my desire to eat meat. And I did actually, but on some level it just didn't seem to work."

"Why?"

"It's bigger than me," I extended my lips outward like a monkey. "It's like it just wasn't in my karma. Not that it was me personally. It's hard to explain."

"So is cannibalism a karmic condition?"

"From a certain perspective. I mean if my tribe is hungry and attacks your tribe, it's pretty likely that your tribe is going to retaliate at some point."

"Really?" The priest cocked his head and studied me. "So if there were a couple more people here and someone came and took me away to eat me, at some point you would run off and eat one of them?"

"No," I said laughing. "Was I able to eat your king?"



“My king?” The priest pursed his lips like a monkey too. “We are talking here about evolution and social behavior, but I have a sense that you are coming at this from a more spiritual perspective.”

“I am. When I was in that hotel room and the thought came to me that I live on a planet that eats the animals, I had a sudden realization of who and what I was and the environment I live in. The realization wasn’t one of just physicality; it was one of spirituality as well. There was also a realization that although there are choices I can make, my choices are limited.”

“You do live in a society. Although you like to think of yourself as an independent soul, no soul is truly independent.”

“True, but some of us in the pack are more influential. Some are rooted in pure ego and that’s what drives them. Others are true leaders and have a higher sense of direction. I imagine somewhere in our past one cannibal and then another had a similar experience to what I had. Picture it, some cannibal having a similar experience and thinking. ‘Oh, I live on a planet where people eat other people.’”

“You are probably close to being correct. Over time if several cannibals had that experience their behavior would eventually change. And it did. But it didn’t change quite like that.” The priest pulled his cap forward. He was sitting with his knees upright. “Our behavior morphs and sometimes we take what we perceive as value and ritualize it.” He paused and pulled his knees to his chest. “There was magic in that ritual you were just involved in. These people actually experience greater personal power, both physically and psychologically, by participating in this ritual.”

“So they discovered something holy. I mean holy at least in their culture.

“Exactly, but what do you think makes ritualistic behavior holy?”

“The thought that a behavior is holy is what makes it holy. Our thoughts are our true power.”

“Yes,” the priest extended his legs and smiled. “The thinking gives way to belief, and when there is no longer belief the holiness or magic is gone.”

“Or it morphs again,” the priest moved his head forward and extended his chin.

“Body of Christ,” I moved a hand toward his face as though offering communion.

The priest smiled. “Yes, of course, that old communion ritual comes out of pagan tradition. Here we are not actually eating the king, we are eating a symbol, a representation of the king.”

“Not eating,” I pointed a finger at him. “The nuns taught me that in grade school. No chewing, no mouth movement, just a little suck and swallow.” I stood up and began to pace. “The other big realization that I have had in this life is around religion. Do you know how I see religion now?”

“Probably the same way I do,” the priest looked me in the eye. “Why do you still think of me as a priest? Is it because of this recent experience? You can change your thinking now.”

“All right,” I nodded and sat back down. “My thinking is that religion happens when a group of people think a certain way and value certain behaviors because a holiness or magic will happen as a consequence. Their experience is so intense they want everyone to experience it. The dynamic that evolves is that one group or culture’s experience is not the same as another and their values, even their magic, are in conflict.”

“Umm,” the teacher placed a finger to his mouth. “Be careful with that last thought. You are on track for the first part. However, if you study religion you will find trends, patterns and similar behavior.”

“I understand that, but look at what religion has done in numerous cultures throughout history and even today. It gives us permission to be violent and irrational. It justifies alliance with racism and bigotry. It has permitted coercive behavior toward children and been used to justify prejudice

toward women, homosexuals and other groups. Religious belief often gives way to guilt and fosters ignorance. It restricts thinking, free inquiry and discovery.”

“So how do you really feel about religion?” The teacher asked jokingly with a tone that bordered on laughter. “No seriously I feel your passion and your pain.” He looked me in the eye. “How about a hike down to the ocean?”

The two of us took the circular path down the mountain. Instead of going down the way we came up we detoured about half way down and followed a narrow rocky path that overlooked the ocean.

“So there are two karmic conditions that I want to talk about,” I said following the teacher down the narrow path. “One has to do with the evolution, or maybe its devolution, of religion. The whole idea of spiritual truth versus religious belief. The other topic I need to explore is food, that whole idea of eating animals, and where I need to take that personally.”

“Before we go there,” the teacher paused and turned to look me in the eye. “We need to explore the concept of karma. Talk to me about your understanding of karma.”

“Well karma is a Buddhist concept,” I scratched my head. His intense focus startled me and I suddenly felt self conscious. “I know,” I smiled. “Buddhism is a religion. After all my babbling about religion I have to admit that the religions of the world have brought forward some wonderful spiritual truths.”

“You have so much emotion about religion. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that at the core of all religion is the quest for spiritual truth.” The teacher nodded with a smile and continued walking. “Think of religion as you would one of those big projects you’ve worked on in the past. Compare and contrast concepts, consider cultural norms, leadership styles, and individual egos. Take what is of value.”

“I’ve been doing that all my life. It was hard in the beginning. It felt like sin when I was a kid.”

“Talk more about your understanding of karma.”

“Well at its core is the idea of consequence, that the actions I take today will determine my fate for tomorrow.”

“The fate thing, you are implying that your behavior is the predictor of your future challenges and blessings.”

“Yes.”

“I just had a flash of the spreadsheet you are creating in your head,” the teacher laughed. “Talk about that.”

“You’ve gotten to know me, but I realize there is no spreadsheet like that. I mean there are no hard and fast rules about behavior and consequences.”

“Don’t be so critical. Talk to me about the picture that is in your head.”

“I can do better than that,” I walked faster to catch up to him. The path grew wider and we walked side by side. We could see the ocean a short distance away. “I’ll draw it for you in the sand.”

We made our way down the path and walked toward the beach. When we got there I sat in the sand and started to draw. “Stay with that,” the teacher instructed and let me work on the drawing independently while he walked to the water. When I was done I signaled to him and he headed toward me. I could see he was carrying something as he approached.

“Well,” he settled in the sand next to me and reached into the bag he was carrying. “Here,” he handed me a large ice cream soda.

“Thanks,” I nodded and fumbled to take the large cup. “Where did you get these?” I looked him the eye and laughed. “Never mind.”

“Talk to me about your chart.”

“Well as you can see there are three columns and three rows. The column on the left represents three types of karma. The three types are karma that has to do with self, karma that impacts other beings and karma that has a grander effect on the planet and the cosmos.” I paused and stirred my ice cream soda with a straw, then managed to stab and retrieve a small piece of brownie.

“And for each of these types there are consequences.” He pointed to the row across the top of the chart and sipped his soda. “Read me the labels and talk to me about what they mean.”

“Well it is your basic plus and minus but I didn’t like what those symbols imply so I came up with words instead. One set of consequences has to do with blessings or grace, and the other has to do with debt or reconstruction.”

“Interesting,” the teacher nodded and pointed to a gang of kids that suddenly came over the hill on ATV’s. Clouds of dust swirled behind them and then blew in our direction.

“There’s karma in the works,” I shook my head and studied the kids.

“Not going there,” the teacher laughed. “Passing judgment on someone else broadens the consequence. By that I mean the consequence will include you.”

“Never mind,” I stood up and looked at the chart. I had a weird feeling when I studied it. Like I wanted to do something else with it but I did not know what. “It’s sort of dumb,” I jumped into one of the squares under blessings in the self column. It reminded me of hop scotch and I stood there on one leg and looked at the teacher. “All these blank boxes have to stay blank, don’t they?”

“If you are asking me if some grand matrix could be created for all mankind the answer is no.”

“Too many decision trees huh?” I drew one in the sand with the foot I had been holding up.

“Something like that,” he laughed and finished his soda then filled it with sand and placed it next to him. “Go with the image in your head.”

I looked down and scratched the decision box with my foot, but remained standing there with one foot in the air. “I am seeing a wheel instead of a matrix. The wheel is spinning and when it stops it lands on a square with a symbol. The symbol is a man throwing up.”

“Talk to me about the vomit.”

“Ooh,” I say in disgust. “It’s an animal covered in all kinds of slime.”

“What does the symbol mean to you?”

“It represents the idea of eating animals.”

“What does vomit mean to you?”

“Disagreement, disgust.”

“Is that how you feel personally?”

“Yes.”

“Would you say the majority of people on this planet feel that way?”

“Oh, definitely not. Then again, the majority prefer not to think about what they are eating. I mean a hamburger patty or sausage doesn’t look anything like the original animal.”

“So what do you think is going on from a karmic perspective when you eat animals?”

“Well, it impacts my health. Meat is fatty. Fat is bad for me. I have a cholesterol issue and there is history of heart disease in my family.”

“Hmm,” the teacher rubbed his chin. “And what have you done about that.”

“Well for the most part I don’t eat red meat, and over the past few years I’ve changed my diet to include a lot more fruits and vegetables.”

“And what is the karmic effect of that behavior?”

“Better health,” I shrug with a helpless look.

“You were a vegetarian a few years back. What was that like?”

“It felt incomplete and almost obsessive at times.”

“Talk to me about spirit. How did you rectify it all?”

“Well, eating animals has a very definite effect on my personal spiritual development. There are periods when I fast, when I don’t eat animals.”

The teacher cocked his head and squeezed my hand. “You have so much emotion, so much feeling about this issue. Give yourself credit for the small and consistent steps you are taking. Karmic behavior isn’t instant. Change isn’t instant. You talk all the time about awareness. Awareness is a cognitive process. We are cognitive beings. The awareness that comes to us in the cognitive process is what sparks our evolution. Awareness is what triggers us to change our behavior.”

“Got it,” I nodded in silence for a moment. “But something you said triggered something for me. The idea of karmic behavior. It’s like there are two sides to it.”

“Three sides,” his eyebrows rose. “Look at your chart.” He studied my face and saw that he was confusing me and that I was about to lose a major ‘ah huh’. “Go ahead,” and he shook his head and waved his hand in the air. “I’m sorry.”

“Here is the realization. I behave in a certain way that creates personal karma for me. As a result I sometimes accumulate blessings that make things smooth and easy, but sometimes it’s a grind and I wind up stepping back and then reconstructing. This is me with all my personal stuff. But I am only one being, one self. There is also collective behavior, collective

blessings, collective debt. If I personally behave in a way that is not consistent with collective karma it’s like going up hill.”

“And sometimes you can never get up the hill. There is collective karma that is way beyond your personal control.”

I bowed my head.

“Why does that make you sad?”

“I hate being out of control.”

“Remember all that talk about self? Remember that idea of I am not I? Well, all of the above applies to karma too. And it doesn’t have to be sad. It’s a journey. Think of it as a good book and you can’t wait to get to the end, and then when you do you want to go back. Sometimes you want to go back and change what happened. Think of yourself as having that power because you do, and in many instances although you do not have total control you do have some control.”

“Back to the whole idea that the only thing I can truly control is my attitude, my behavior.”

“But remember, the impact of that change in attitude and change in behavior affects more than you. Look at your chart,” the teacher pointed to ‘other beings’ and then ‘the planet and the cosmos’. “Another thing,” he cocked his head compassionately. “Watch those strong feelings. Feelings and thoughts are real. They have consequences too.” He pointed to ‘blessings’ and then ‘reconstruction’.

“What?” My eyebrows turned downward and my face took on an expression of denial. Suddenly there were a row of nuns in the back of my head, and a priest who didn’t treat me fairly.

“Religion brought you many gifts too. Think about them. Let go of the anger.”

I shook my head silently.

“Remember too the gift of forgiveness. As you want to be forgiven, others need you to forgive them.” Suddenly the teacher was a priest in a black suit with a white collar.

I looked at him with a paused blink and when I opened my eyes I was a priest too, dressed in the same black suit and white collar.

“Back to church,” the teacher priest stood up and brushed off his pants. We headed toward the trail we’d taken earlier. We wound up back at the temple where the ritual had taken place earlier. It was the same building but it was different now. There were stain glass windows and statues and crucifixes.

“Forgiveness,” he whispered in my ear and we walked side by side toward the entrance of the temple. “And don’t forget self forgiveness,” he gave me a stern parental look and opened the door. We walked side by side down the aisle toward the altar. When we got there I bowed my head and closed my eyes. When I opened them the temple was transformed again. It was bright and cheery and there was a feeling of newness and openness about it. “It’s a new dawn,” the teacher looked at me smiling from ear to ear. Surrounding us were works of art, some of them very old. It was an odd mix of ancient culture and post modern times. A candle floated in a globe of water in front of us. The globe just hung in space with nothing above it or beneath it.

“Go ahead,” the teacher motioned his head forward. I reached out to touch it and my hand went right through it. “It’s a hologram,” he smiled. “We have to get ready,” his eyebrows rose and he walked toward a closet and took out two priestly looking white robes with hoods. “Put this on,” he held the two hangers above his head and handed me one. I slipped it on over my head. Suddenly there was a ghost of myself standing beside me, and a ghost of the teacher standing beside him. We stood in front of the floating candle and studied the flickering flame. There was an odd feeling about me and I felt like I was participating in a wedding.

“It is a wedding,” he looked me in the eye as we stood at the altar. “A marriage of body and soul.”

some mary  
is sitting in a chair  
studying a crystal  
and I am sitting there with her  
a guide  
a rebel in charge of  
*play rewind fast forward*

some mary is my friend  
i know her in my dreams but  
not now, not now

she sits there  
spins a karmic wheel  
we study the symbol and she  
facilitates me

helps me select  
scenes  
from my life  
without agreeing  
disagreeing  
judging

some mary, she sees me wiggle,  
she looks at me with those penetrating eyes  
tells me  
we can go on and on and on

so let’s fast forward miss mary  
talk to me about possibilities  
show me karmic blessings  
and  
karmic debit

some mary, she studies me  
tells me I know the forecast better than she

*then like my dream, she leaves me sitting like some silly girl*

## RETURN TO JOHARI'S WINDOW

"You know I was joking," Jo said as we were finishing lunch.

"Well I was hungry," I reached for the check.

"Just use the facilitator's number," Hari handed me a pen and I scribbled on the check. "Great," Hari looked over my shoulder and then stood up. In a few seconds Jo and I stood up as well.

"Do you do know the origin of the Johari Window?" I asked as the three of us headed back toward the temple.

"No," Hari said honestly. Jo followed with an empty shrug.

"The Johari Window was named after the first names of its inventors, psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. The model they created is used to help people understand what they know and don't know about the impact of their behavior or about themselves. When people give formal feedback to someone about their behavior, this model is used to describe it. It is a four paned illustration that divides behavior into four types of personal awareness. The four types, or quadrants of this window, are open, hidden, blind, and unknown."

"So it wasn't intended as a framework to talk about karma?" Hari gave me a disturbed look. "So that's why you named me Hari," he stopped walking and put his hand on his hip. "I feel so made up."

"Me too, so used," Jo laughed in a hearty GI way. "But it works," he slapped me on the back and let his arm settle around my shoulder.

"And does it work for you?" I laughed and put my face in Jo's face, then reached out with both arms, one circling Hari and the other circling Jo.

"Silly," Hari said with a lisp. "You know it works very well."

"So my observations," Jo began when we settled back in at the temple. "You got the question right on. Too bad you got an actual word instead of an image or picture as the answer. Then again, you asked for a word and not an image."

I closed my eyes and imagined the crystal. The image of a box appeared. I knew what was in it without zooming in, but zoomed in anyway. There it was, the man in the box with his chest diced and sliced.

"You don't want to know," my eyelashes fluttered then opened.

"But now you do," they both said in unison.

"So let's continue with the simulation," Jo instructed. "What window do you want to open next?"

"The hidden one," I smiled. "Or rather the aspects of the hidden that are cosmically, psychically inspired and then forgotten."

"Oh," Hari said in a low and pondering tone and took his yoga position.

The rhythmic breathing and relaxation came in seconds. There before me was the crystal ball. Instead of a question there was a request: Bring me to the state of psychic awareness that I experienced in San Francisco in 1976. The ball shook and the words disappeared, then a new word appeared: Oneden.

cosmic harmony  
and cash dollars,  
personal welfare  
and efficient methods

swing like a pendulum

wellness is a gift,  
all else is opportunity.

cash transactions and karma  
some times  
go hand in hand  
and  
at other times  
there is a disconnect

i reflect on a reconciliation spreadsheet in my  
head

kindness and dollars,  
love and materialism,  
thoughts and feelings

wellness is cosmic blessing;  
all else is dissonance

modern tribes  
recruit lonely warriors  
of like mind. yet  
many lonely warriors  
choose to remain in exile,  
psychically searching for resonant souls  
to tell their tale

me and you  
and our queer species  
is always in search of meaning,  
lusting for purpose  
and longing for understanding

memories wiggle to the surface  
in conscious times.  
unknown origins  
bleed their sound and video bites  
until we believe them,  
integrate them

our innate need to weave tales  
pushes us to connect, link and make  
things fit.

we talk our story when we find our tribe  
and the words  
are like a repeated intercourse  
giving birth to new memories that wiggle  
unintentional truths  
as we show and tell.  
did that really happen?  
did it happen just that way?

emotions untangle and  
speak another level of truth  
until I imagine that I am you,  
and then I become you  
and we explore memories together



## ONEDIN

Although we both completed graduate programs and were working full time, we frequently played the role of sophomores or juniors who coached and quizzed one another even though there was no quiz or final. It was our way of being with one another, and often opened a door to higher level discussions about the purpose of life. In June of 1976 we left the east coast and headed for California. The drive provided multiple opportunities for reverting to our earlier student lives, and for philosophical speculation. We were somewhere in the Mojave Desert at one point quizzing one another about Maslow and his hierarchy of needs. It was hot, very hot, and we were advised to turn the heat on high to keep the engine cool. Sitting on the back seat was a cooler filled with water, fruit and soft drinks. We both wanted something to drink but we were each in a snit and refused to turn around and get something.

“You get it, I’m driving.”

“No you get it,” Karen popped one ‘wet one’ after another out of a plastic container. “Look how fast they dry!” She declared holding one and then another out the window. She had a sense for how annoying she was, and when I stopped talking she became annoyed with her own behavior. “Emotional, that was the fourth one.”

“Yeah, no I think he called it belonging. Remember, it had something to do with relationships.”

“Hmm,” Karen nodded and stuffed the package of wet ones in the glove compartment. “So we got four out of five. That’s what, 80%?”

“You get a B minus.” I laughed and Karen joined in. “I should have a double major. I feel like I did time in psychology and special education.”

“Yeah well I got all that English crap in my head. Who needs to know about the number of lines in Shakespeare’s plays, or the percentage of run ons?”

“Very useful,” I shook my head. “Use it everyday.”

“Physiological, safety, emotion, self actualization,” Karen said as though praying to her lap. “I can’t remember the other one.” She turned to look at me. “You sure there were five?”

“It doesn’t matter,” I shook my head. “What really makes sense to me is the opportunity for self actualization.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well it makes sense that if basic things like food, shelter and stuff are provided for you that you can then spend time and energy investigating higher purpose.”

“What about all those Indian types who deprive themselves in search of spiritual truth? You know,” she chuckled. “The ones that fast for days and sleep on a bed of nails.”

“There is definitely a link between suffering, self discovery and truth. But you know that’s a choice, and it ain’t my choice.” I turned to look at Karen and found her eyes. “And in the west, in our culture, we don’t need to follow that path. It’s not our construct. I mean you don’t have to be in poverty and have all kinds of hardships to find God, to discover spiritual truth.”

“So now that you’re done with school and working are you finding greater peace? Is there more opportunity to pursue the metaphysical?”

“Absolutely,” I nodded. “Don’t you think?”

Karen nodded silently.

“I mean I am not totally there. That relationship thing that Maslow talks about, there is truth in that. If I could find that one special person, man that would be it, then I would really be at peace.”

“You will,” Karen yawned. “There is a gas station coming up. Want to stop?”

We stopped at the gas station and devoured just about everything that was in the cooler. The next day we were in San Francisco. We spent about a week there. One night Karen and I performed a non intentional street act. It was an argument about where to have dinner, and as more and more people gathered around us the conversation became more intense. It really wasn't about where to go for dinner. It was about being tired and angry and frustrated. It was also about creating spontaneous drama in front of an audience. We both like that. For me it was also about dealing with a sudden realization that San Francisco was not the right city to call home, which meant dealing with the fact that Connecticut was home. Something else was going on too. My interest in psychic phenomenon over the past few years had waned. There was a new curiosity within me, and there was also a new sense of openness. I needed to understand my own psychic capability and really understand what happens when the soul leaves the body. Education and training provided me with a new approach, a new perspective, and a new way of thinking. I was feeling prepared; prepared to navigate and do battle with the psychic mafia of self declared mystics and fortune telling opportunists in my quest for spiritual truth.

“No,” Karen put one foot forward and crossed her arms as she shook her head. “It reminds me of that place in Utah.”

“With the short blonde woman who giggled every two seconds?”

“Umm hmm,” she nodded like a southern bell. “Let me tell you the specials tonight.” She cocked her head and went on and on about the dinner specials.

“I'll have the steak special with the banana cream pie.”

Karen turned with a sashay and then back to me. “We don't have that today.”

“That's the forth time I placed an order and the fourth time you said you don't have that today. What do you have?”

Karen fluttered her eyelashes then laughed. “No really, look at that place. Do you really want to go in there? Looks like it will take forever.”

“Pizza?”

“Not in the mood.”

“Chinese?”

Karen said nothing and looked at the sidewalk.

“Mexican?”

Karen cocked her head but still remained silent.

“Well you know what, I am hungry.”

I pushed my way through the small circle around us and approached a street vendor. Karen was right behind me. I pointed, she nodded, and I ordered two of something. We stood eating and bouncing on and off the curb, watching the cars slam on their brakes when our toes touched the street.

A woman across the street was watching us. She crossed and approached us. “Hello,” she said with a serious smile. “I've been watching you,” she looked me in the eye. “You must have an appreciation for drama.”

I shrugged and Karen nodded. The woman had very long light brown hair, similar to Karen's, and was wearing a dark colored cape that covered most of her body. All I could really see of her was her face and neck. They were milk white.

“Would you like to buy a ticket?”

“Ticket for what?” I could feel my eyebrows furl.

“Our show,” she smiled without showing teeth. “You can't buy tickets like you can for other shows,” she said with a coy laugh and now showed teeth.

"You have to be invited to see our show," her eyebrows rose. "It's not open to just anyone," she shook her head and pointed up at a marquee.

"Really," I cocked my head and studied her face.

"Oh yes, and we are all involved, all the actors. We observe people on the street, get a feel for what is going on inside, you know."

"So suppose someone just walks up to the ticket booth and wants to buy a ticket?"

"Do you see a ticket booth?" She cocked her head in return and studied me.

I shrugged like a little boy and glanced at two glass doors that appeared locked, then looked at Karen. Karen went over and looked in.

"How weird," Karen covered each side of her face with her hands as she peered, then looked at me.

"Far out," she did her hippy sway with a nod.

"So do you want to buy two tickets?"

"How much?"

"Ten," she scratched her head. "Plus a little donation if you can, I mean if you want to stay for dinner."

"Dinner? I don't think we want dinner. Do we want dinner?" I looked at Karen as though I swallowed something sour.

Karen shrugged. "I don't know let's think about it. Do we have to decide now?"

"Of course not," the caped woman touched Karen's hand then fished beneath the cape for a pocket. Suddenly a hand appeared magically in the air with two tickets.

"Great," I gave the woman a twenty. "What time is the show?"

"In about an hour," she took the money and walked toward the curb. "You won't be sorry," she turned toward us. "It's a great show. You'll fit in with us. You'll see." She turned toward the street and started to cross, then turned back and studied us. "Later."

"Later," Karen and I said at the same time and started walking in the opposite direction.

"How weird was that?"

"Pretty weird," Karen looked at me and then at the sidewalk. "So you want to just like walk around for awhile or what?"

"Sure," I shrugged and pointed to a park.

We walked around the park for awhile and sat down a few times, Karen grabbing my arm every five minutes to study my watch. Finally we decided to walk back to the theatre and watch the people who came around, curious to see what types would be attracted to this performance. We decided not to go in until five o'clock, and stood across the street. First a few hippie types came by. They hung around the front door for a few moments, and then one by one slipped in. Then a couple of women passed us and crossed the street to the theatre. We studied them as they crossed and realized that they were not women, they were men dressed as women. They too disappeared behind the door. Then a group of nicely dressed men and women showed up; the men wearing sport coats and some of them ties, and the women with long dresses, some of them in heels.

"Think I'm dressed all right?" Karen nudged me in the stomach with an elbow and bounced backward on her feet as she pointed toward her sandals.

"I don't think this place is going to have a dress code. We are in San Francisco, remember?"

"Yeah," Karen moved behind me a step and pushed me forward. "So come on let's go," she pushed me off the curb.

We opened the door and it was pitch black inside. As our eyes adjusted we could see pockets of people standing around in these circles of light. It seemed odd that there was only light where there were people. Some stood silently, others chatted quietly. I looked about and was comforted when I spotted a couple of exit signs and a sign for rest rooms.

"I think I'd like to go before the show. You?"

Karen laughed uncomfortably. "You are the one with the hollow leg. Of course I wanna go."

We inched our way in the darkness toward the neon restroom sign. An echo of my father's favorite epitaphs clicked in my head in my own voice. "You nuts boy?" I pushed the men's room door open. The room was black except where men stood to pee over urinals. It was as though each person produced their own light. Some of the men standing at the urinals had more light than others. I selected a urinal next to a man with the brightest light. "Whatta ya got wheels in your head?" My father's words in my voice continued to rattle in my head. I kept my eyes straight ahead despite a strong desire to look to the left and the right. My heart was racing and I couldn't pee. I stood there with my eyes closed and the flow finally began.

"This will be a great show," the bright man next to me stopped peeing. "Have you been to the stage?" I could hear him jostling and imagined a jiggling ritual that some men perform, but did not give in to the urge to look. He stepped back and the light went with him. I became aware that I was producing my own light. It was dull. I could hardly see as I peed harder, trying not to pee on my pants.

"No," I said stepping back and zipping my pants. I sensed that a warning voice was about to go off in my head. It did. "Get the hell out of here!"

"William," the handsome man extended his hand. He was one of the men in a sports coat and tie.

"Hi," I smiled ignoring my voices. My smile brought on an aura of courage and adventure. My light intensified.

William noticed the increase in light. "Yes, that is it." He extended an arm toward the door and I stepped in front of him and exited.

I followed his light down the dark hallway. We walked for what seemed like a long time and I followed him towards a closed door. He waited for me to get closer to him, his light projecting the way. "Let's not miss the beginning of the show."

"It's not like that," he opened the door and I could see the stage. This isn't a typical play, you know, with a beginning, a middle and an end. You'll see," he nodded with a smile. "But don't worry, you won't miss anything."

On one side of the stage, pretty high up, was a swing that was more of a trapeze. On the other side of the stage were three large crucifixes lined up against the wall.

"Know your part?"

"Huh?" I gave him a confused look.

"This is uh," he paused and wiggled all ten fingers in the air. "Somewhat of an interactive piece."

"Oh," I swallowed hard and realized he could sense my discomfort,

"Not to worry," his smile lit up his face and he reached out to touch my back.

His touch was electric. "Well that should be very interesting," I put on an aloof face and was suddenly soothed by his touch.

“Here,” he walked across the stage to another door and opened it. I walked toward him and followed him into a room that was behind the stage. A huge table set up for dinner was before us. A mixture of floral scents filled the room from numerous vases of flowers that were placed on the table. “Will you be joining us for dinner?”

“Probably,” I paused for a moment and thought of Karen. “I am here with someone and actually I’ve lost track of her.” I scratched my head and offered him a puzzled look.

“Not to worry,” he accepted the troubled look and shook his head rapidly. “Frequently happens here with the dark and all, but we all find our way.” He placed a forefinger to his lips as though shushing himself. “She may have exited briefly. You will see.”

A loud bang startled both of us and was followed by a booming voice. “Welcome ladies and gentlemen.” The voice was almost circus like and came from every direction at the same time.

William motioned for me to follow him. We scurried across the stage and toward a small staircase that led to the audience. As I moved down the stairs with William I could see people and their lights entering rows and taking their seats. Their collective light was just enough for me to see the first and last rows of the theatre. It wasn’t very big and I guessed there were between 30 and 40 people.

On each side of the theater there were bright red neon exit signs. Someone was standing by one of the signs and I could see from the person’s light that the signs were not very high. When the person reached up to touch the sign I realized that it wasn’t a sign at all, but rather a large button.

“The exit buttons are all part of the interaction of the play,” William whispered in my ear as we approached the third row.

A young woman took our tickets and greeted us and gave each one of us a Playbill that explained the play. We took our seats and I spent a few moments studying the Playbill. The play was called *Onedin* and is pronounced *on-edén*. The Playbill explained that the word is from an ancient language and can

best be defined as a condition involving a journey from all to one and back to all again. It furthered explained that *onedin* was a mathematical concept in an ancient mystical culture. It involved geometry and what the Playbill described as ‘exponential implications of being and behavior’. I found of all this very confusing and turned to William.

“Isn’t there like a one line summary in here that describes what this is all about?”

William’s electric fingers found their way over my lap to a page in the Playbill that provided exactly what I was looking for.

“This is a story about the human condition from individual or personal as well as group or collective perspectives.”

“Thanks,” I whispered to William and continued to read about the play. There are three acts. Act one is called *The Players & the Played*. It is about playing the role of self in a human incarnation, and the need we all have to pull others into our personal dramas. In life we are either active, intentional players, or we are being played by someone else. Act 2 is called *Dualities*. It is about the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of good and evil. Act 3 is called *Destinies*. It is about a spectrum of possible events and courses of action, and how emotion can be the trigger that shapes and directs our fate. The unique part of all of this was the unconventional approach. It involved actors with intentional and scripted parts, but it also involved people from the audience that were given a specific scene or framework and asked to work with the actors to spontaneously build in and expand their personal dramas to develop a broader perspective of the human condition.

“How can that work? How does it flow?” I shook my head and asked aloud.

“It’s not as sequential as it seems,” William put his hand on my knee.

As I continued to sit and wait for the play to begin I felt out of place and uncomfortable. I wondered if I should look for Karen. I wondered if she left the building. A thought occurred to me that I would have exited too if I had not found William. This was a scary place to be.

“Do I have time to try the exit button?”

“Hurry,” William nudged me in the side. “If you are looking for your friend simply call her name when you get to the other side.”

“Right,” I nodded agreeably but there was skepticism in my voice. I made my way out of the aisle toward the exit button and pushed it.

“Karen,” I called out in the dark. There were only a few lights milling about and in an instant I had the sense that I was in the exact place that I had been the last time I saw Karen. “Hey,” I said bumping into her. I expected her to question me about where I had been, but she didn’t say a word about it. “Go ahead,” I motioned at the lady’s room door. “I already went, I’ll wait here for you.”

Karen went into the lady’s room and was out shortly. We entered the theatre and found our way to the third row. I introduced her to William and they politely shook hands.

\*\*\*\*\* *Act 1: The Players & the Played* \*\*\*\*\*

Suddenly a light appeared high on the stage. It became brighter as I and other members of the audience studied it. The light soon became a heavy set woman swinging on a trapeze.

“Life,” the booming, everywhere voice announced. “An intentional journey in the material and mundane was designed to span one hundred and forty four years. Our desires and our behaviors significantly shortened this span.”

There was silence for a moment. The voice returned with a shrill, loud whisper; again coming from everywhere. “And what have you done to contribute to this condition?”

“This is too wild for me,” Karen stood up. “I can’t deal with this.”

“It’s ok,” William took her hand and pointed to an exit button. “Go there and push that button. It will bring you back.” He smiled at her and then at me. “It’s ok, it’s safe.”

“We invite you to look into the mirror of your soul,” the booming voice continued.

Karen looked at me as though she had seen a ghost and the people sitting next to us stood up to let her pass. I watched her push the exit button and disappear.

“There is something going on with elapsed time when that button is pushed, right?”

William was silent for a moment and then affirmed. “Um, somewhat. But don’t get distracted. Focus on the show.”

The stage went dark and then lit up again with the woman on the trapeze. At first we could not see her features. She was just a heavy set figure swinging in the air. As she continued to swing from darkness into light, then from light into darkness, her features became more distinguishable. As we watched the period of darkness become longer than the period of light. Her face was bright and smiling, her long hair flowing behind her as she swung. She reminded me of a fat angel. Below her in the center of the stage was a single bed, simply made, with a small oval rug on one side. On the other side of the bed was a mirror. The woman on the trapeze continued to swing, her light casting shadows on the images below. Suddenly another light appeared. It came up from the rug beside the bed, and slowly became the figure of a man. He stood there, his light reflecting in the mirror.

“Child of light,” the booming, everywhere voice continued. “Who came from the one shall return to the one. The journey in between is the subject of our story this evening.”



The figure of a man was standing on the rug with his side to the audience. With the next bright swing of the trapeze he turned to face us. He extended his hand and a broad smile slowly consumed his face. "Who will join me in reflection?" He cocked his head and walked toward the mirror as though to straighten it. He straightened his head and pulled at the bottom edge of the mirror. It began to grow larger. The stage slowly turned so that one side of the bed was facing the audience. On the other side of the bed was the enlarged mirror. It became the size of a movie screen and oddly contained no images, only a silvery reflection of varying intensity from the light of the standing man and the woman swinging on the trapeze. The man continued to stand with a broad smile, his hand extended with an open palm toward the ceiling.

William stood up and exited the row, then walked toward the stage.

"My brother," the actor took William by the hand and brought him to the center of the stage. "Drama is bundled into each life time we have in the journey to One. In between each life journey is an experience that some call purgatory, which for many has a religious zeal with roots in Zoroastrianism and Christianity. Regardless of the emotional religious attachment to this concept, or whatever idea or word is used to describe the space between lives, two important ideas adhered to human consciousness. One is the idea that behavior has consequences, the other that behavior is a vehicle for learning and evolution. Purgatory is the space between scenes to review our lines and reconcile our behavior in light of how it impacted others. All the players from an incarnation stand with us in this space. Our understanding of their experiences resulting from our behavior brings us to a place of atonement. We also stand in this space for each of our fellow players, sharing how their behavior impacted us."

The actor looked up at the giant mirror which suddenly lit up like a huge screen saver. Faces and bodies zoomed in and out from the center. Some morphed continually from young to old in no set sequence. Bordering the edges were cats and dogs, chickens and pigs, cows and horses, flowers and trees, mountains and oceans.

"The mind is ever active," the actor sat on the bed and studied the screen. He then stood up and faced the audience. "When the mind is at peace with the soul it encounters this space, be it when the soul is still with the body or when the body has departed the soul." The actor paused and turned to study the screen again. "Thank you William for projecting this reflection."

William smiled and bowed.

"Before you is a collection of people that William has played in this incarnation. Before he moves on to the next incarnation, each of these players whom William has played will visit this space with a gift for William. The gift will be their experience, a sharing of how their lives were impacted by William. William will integrate this experience, and the gift will be his opportunity to move on, should the played elect to move on." The actor stood silent in a spotlight toward the center of the stage, the bed and the giant screen behind him. He was silent for a moment. "Sometimes," he paused with a finger to his lips. "The players whom we play are intimidated or offended, or for some other reason will not participate." He bowed his head and then slowly lifted it. "How sad it is," he continued when his head was straight, and then continued to lift it toward the ceiling as he spoke. "To encounter a 'no show' and be suspended in this space."

William closed his eyes as though deep in concentration.

The actor took a few steps toward William and stood before him. The spotlight captured them both. "I ask you to be one of the played instead of the player. Allow your mind to drift and select a player who has played you, or is in the process of playing you." He stepped back and walked toward the screen with an open palm. He then walked toward the bed and lay down.

The screen returned to silver as William stood there with his eyes closed. When he opened them the screen suddenly became populated with faces and bodies. I could not believe my eyes as I studied the screen. The central figures were my family. Karen stood smiling behind my mother. Surrounding them were faces that came and went from college, high school, and grade school. Nuns, teachers and priests also came and went.



“Come forward my new friend,” William extended both arms and looked directly at me. “Come join me here on the stage.”

I sat in the audience nearly paralyzed, but knew I needed to move. Should I run for the exit button? Should I approach the stage? I stood up and exited the aisle, and walked automatically toward the steps that led to the stage. I could feel my legs trembling as I walked up the three steps. I stopped walking and stood to one side of the stage, expecting William or the actor to walk toward me. I stood in silence for a brief period, watching the images shift on the giant screen. I was suddenly very self conscious, and embarrassed at the thought of what might appear. William approached me.

“Where am I?” William looked directly at me and then at the screen. He was still on the opposite end of the stage and the actor was motionless on the bed.

I looked briefly at William and shrugged and then my eyes returned to the giant screen. Toward one edge was an image of William in the men’s room earlier.

The actor sat up on the bed and centered himself on it in a yoga position. “How did he make you feel when he stood next to you?”

“Challenged,” William said looking across the stage at the actor and then at me. “You brought me back to an earlier time, a time of speaking and preaching. You bring me to a place of empathy and needing to listen, to a place of sharing and openness. The challenge is about building new awareness and expanding self, and managing emotion and drama. ”

“What else are you feeling?” The actor continued.

“There are physical desires,” William looked down. “I will not speak of them.” His eyes closed and then opened. “We each choose not give them energy.” He was silent for a moment. “But there is also a spiritual inspiration filled with zest and hope.” He looked at me with a smile. “And I am honored to be of service.” He walked toward me and his smile broadened. “This

courageous body and soul made a conscious choice for spiritual adventure.” He was now standing a couple of inches away from me. He looked different somehow, but very familiar. As I thought about it I realized that it wasn’t so much his appearance that was familiar, it was his aura.

“Who are you?” My eyes narrowed and I stared at him.

“You do not know me now,” William shook his head both ways.

“Who were you?”

William was startled. He looked at me, then the actor sitting on the bed, then the floor, and then his eyes settled on mine. From the corner of my eye I could see the images shifting on the screen. I turned to look and there in the center of the screen was a painting that a friend did of me. It is mostly my head and it is surrounded by colored lights that remind me of balloons. Each balloon is connected to me with a thin, faint stream of white light. Below me are images of a dock, a school, and a TV set with an image of a covered wagon and two horses.

“I am one of the balloons that surround you,” William said meekly.

Suddenly the woman on the trapeze swung into focus. With her the light shifted from very dark to very bright. During a period of brightness the actor arose from the bed and walked toward the audience. He turned to face us and the room swung into a dark period. “We do not choose the people who come into our life,” the actor’s voice was flat and without echo in the darkness. “Karmic conditions create a spectrum of possibility, and the people who come into our lives bring with them opportunity.” There was silence for a moment and a gentle light surrounded him. He turned to the audience. “We can say no to them. We can shut them out. This is an option.” He turned again to William and I. “Or we can say yes. When we do this we say yes to life and yes to opportunity. When we say yes we open ourselves to new karma, and new possibility.”

My eyes focused on the actor, then the audience, and then shifted to William. Without warning I started to glow and suddenly a spotlight was on me. I

stepped forward a few feet. “But what is the point?” I turned to the actor and then to the audience and placed both hands on my hips. “Why? What is the purpose? Isn’t the goal to return to the One?”

“Yes,” to your last question. The actor stood facing me with arms folded, as though he were intentionally using my body language to assist him in communicating. “The journey is not instant my brother. We do not instantly become one with God.” He dropped his hands to his sides and stepped in front of me, then leaned forward and partially cupped my right ear with his hand. “Communion,” he whispered loudly so the audience could hear. “That is our goal. Karmic conditions bring us to a place where like minds resonate together.” His eyes focused on mine in an intense stare. I did not break it but instead starred back in silence. He sensed that I did not understand and broke the stare with a smile and slight turn of his head. “You have at times,” he nodded. “Felt like someone else, yet at the same time felt like yourself.”

“Oh yes,” I said quietly with a nod. “And at times I completely forget self.”

“That is communion,” the actor said with a smile. “When out of the body we resonate, commune, with like minds. We become one with them. This is how we progress on our journey.” He looked at me and then at William. “The two of you are of like mind. Out of the body he is one of a band of souls who move through the cosmic with you. You become one another and self becomes just another one of you.”

I stood there thinking, somewhat in shock and somewhat in denial. I didn’t like the idea of a purposeful journey or the concept of process, but I was suddenly inspired and realized that it didn’t matter what I liked or disliked and that so much of what I felt was based on words and concepts that were not adequate. I looked at William and saw him nod, then looked up at the screen. It was filled with the balloon like lights, but there was very little color. I felt outside of myself and watched the lights move through one another like racing children. They zoomed everywhere on the screen very quickly, and then the pace changed and the lights floated toward the center of the screen and formed a large cluster. The curtains on the stage began to close and the audience clapped wildly.

“Intermission time,” William whispered in my ear.

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“That was intense,” I reached for my breast pocket to see if my cigarettes were still there. We found our way toward the stairs, and moved down an aisle toward the exit button. I looked back and saw William a good distance away talking to the actor. I pushed the exit button.

“Karen?” I was standing on the sidewalk across the street from the theatre. I lit a cigarette and looked around. “What just happened? Where am I?”

“Oh we’re not far,” Karen’s familiar voice was somewhere in front of me. She was looking in a store window.

“That was wild.”

“What?” She walked toward me swinging her purse. “You smoking weed?”

“No,” I gave her a disgusted look.

“I am.” She sucked on a joint with the same hand that was swinging the purse and then looped the bag over her shoulder.

We walked a short distance as I told her about the play, and then announced that I had to get back for the second act. She walked back with me, telling me I was really wasted, and gave me a funny grin when I told her I wasn’t stoned. She knew I did not like smoking pot. We were in the process of developing an agreement between us that we would not judge one another. That agreement melded our friendship for many years into the future.

“Far out,” Karen declared as she leaned on the building. “So if there’s like a time thing going on then I’ll be here when you get out.”

“Cool.” I looked at Karen and did not know what else to say.

\*\*\*\*\* Act 2: *Dualities* \*\*\*\*\*

I found my way back to the men's room when I went back into the theatre. Others were leaving as I entered, making it extremely dark as the only light in the entire men's room was my own when the last person exited. All the urinals were vacant and I selected the same one that I had used earlier. As I stood there I tried to remember what the second act was about. My thinking was interrupted by a loud swing of the men's room door. I was somewhat frightened and I turned instinctively. It was William.

"Ah," I could hear him unzip. "So here we are, the player and the played."

"Yeah," I finished peeing and backed up, then stood and waited for him."

"The next piece is truly profound."

"I tried to remember it from the Playbill, but my mind went blank. I am a little numb from the first act."

"It's called *Dualities* and it is about the nature of God and the nature of man."

"Far out," I said stupidly. I could hear him zip and he turned toward me. I was wearing an anxious but curious look.

"Don't worry," he shook his head. "We won't be on stage this time." He quickly washed and dried his hands. "It's going to start any minute so we better hurry."

Again I followed this man through the darkness and into the theater. As we approached the aisle I could see someone sitting in my seat. "My wife Diana." William announced when we got there. "We reunited during intermission." He turned toward the attractive woman. "This is the young man I was telling you about."

Diana extended her hand and smiled. "Oh don't worry about the seating," she said responding to the apprehension in my eyes. "There are no assigned seats," she said jokingly and slapped my hand.

"The cosmic is binary by nature," the booming everywhere voice returned. We quickly took our seats and I realized I was sitting between William and Diana.

"Would you like to switch?" I whispered to Diana and started to stand.

"No, no," she grabbed my hand and pulled me back down.

"It should come as no surprise to you," the booming everywhere vice continued. "That the duality inherent in nature extends to our very behavior. Choice is everywhere. Choice is opportunity."

As the curtain started to open there were two distinct sounds at the same time. One a ringing and clinging that was very harmonious, the other a human voice that started out with a profound base "ahhh" and ended in a chaotic shriek.

"Preferences," the booming everywhere voice screamed.

When the curtains fully opened the woman on the trapeze swung deep into the audience and then far back onto the stage. She was naked from the waste up, with her arms positioned around the ropes of the trapeze in a way that concealed her breasts. With her next swing into the audience she leaned back and let her naked breasts bounce freely. She laughed coyly and her head moved slowly to and fro. As she swung back she concealed her breasts again, and then revealed them again when she swung forward. She continued to do this as she swung back and forth. Slowly my attention shifted from the woman on the trapeze to what was happening below her on the stage.

I struggled to zoom in on the dim objects. I could see three upside-down crucifixes. My heart began to race and I was feeling very uncomfortable. Again I thought about running to the exit button. Both William and Diana

turned toward me at the same time and offered a smile. I felt as though I were a child sitting between parents.

There was a loud sucking sound and a man became visible on one of the crucifixes. An outstretched arm with smoke billowing from his fingertips extended to the next crucifix. Suddenly a body appeared on the second crucifix as hand touched hand, and the third crucifix became visible in the same way.

The man on the first crucifix wiggled his feet from loosely tied rope and slid from the cross. He was horribly thin with a grayish complexion. He stood up and walked to the center of the stage. "We are the outcome of our behavior in three representations. I represent the physical. I choose pleasure over pain but my decadence has taken its toll on this body. I suffer physical consequences without choice, as my choices were made earlier."

"And I," the man on the second crucifix slid from it in the same way and joined the first man in the center of the stage. His eyes were wide and roaming, and his movement was cautious. "Represent the mental state. I choose a balance of head and heart, but my heart is overcome with feelings about how I interacted with others and how I treated my body. My thinking has become delusional. I am paralyzed by thoughts of should be and could be and cannot."

Both men looked at the third crucifix and the man who was hanging from it rose upward like a ghost and descended between the other two. "I am the spiritual component," he smiled and outstretched both arms and embraced the two men.

"Free will is a gift that becomes either blessed or polluted by karma. Our delusions limit us. Our physical capabilities limit us. I am the essence that remains in spirit to integrate experience. I am the evolving personality."

"Evolving to what you may ask," the first man stepped forward slightly but remained in the embrace.

The ghost in the middle rose above the other two and remained suspended in the air.

"The nature of being," the booming everywhere voice returned. "Encompasses all behavior, all choices. Consequently the nature of being has within it the capacity for wrong doing or evil." The voice stopped for a moment. "And what does this imply about the nature of God?"

My heart sunk as I sat and listened. I did not want to hear what was being said. I sat there petrified. Could it be possible that God has the capacity for evil? Could it be that God is both good and evil? It felt as though my heart were beating out of my chest. I was scared. The fear turned to anger and then denial. I sat there with my arms folded and continued to watch and listen.

The man who was suspended like a ghost returned to the center of the stage. "Before you call me blasphemous or erroneously come to wild conclusions, let us explore the truth about evil. Perhaps God has the capacity for evil, but it is man who makes it manifest."

The skinny man cocked his head and studied the ghost, then turned to face the audience. "Think of light and darkness as metaphors for good and evil. Just as darkness is the absence of light, evil is the absence of goodness. Evil comes from the nada. Look at me," he paused and shrugged with a coy smile. "Each element of my physical condition is the result of inaction. Goodness comes from intention. It is intuitively knowing what to do and taking action to make it happen. Evil comes from not listening to the voice within, from not taking action."

"Unless," the man from the crucifix representing the mental state whispered loudly. "The man listening to the voice within is nuts."

The ghost floated to the tip of the stage and leaned slightly forward. "Insanity is repeating the same behavior over and over and expecting different results." He moved back a few feet and continued. "Stuck in our drama and our anger we also have the capacity for evil intention." He closed his eyes and looked to the left. "But there is a price," he said softly and slowly opened his eyes.

“And that price is karma,” the man representing the mental state crouched in a paranoid way and then stood tall and looked to the left and then the right. “My delusions are the price I pay,” his eyebrows rose and his face took on the expression of a pompous elite man. “And it ain’t just me that pays honey,” he turned to the side and placed a hand on his hip. “It’s collective,” he stuck out his tongue. “A species thing,” He threw his hands in the air. “I loose, you loose too.”

A man in blackface appeared at one edge of the stage. He tipped his hat and danced from one end of the stage to the other singing, “Nobody know the trouble I see.”

The skinny man watched with an open mouth as the man in blackface sang, and then studied the man representing the mental state. “It may be true that your behavior has an impact on us all, but if your behavior has evil intention, intention to hurt me or another, then I have the power if it is within my karma to resist that intention. I have choices in the energy I attract from the earth and the people around me. It builds my aura.” He stood tall and proud. “I choose to not allow you to tap into my power. If I choose it will be. There is no power in evil.” He cocked his head as he studied the man, then circled his lips with his forefinger. “However, in a queer sort of way you inspire me.”

“We spend too much time taking about the nada, about evil,” the booming everywhere voice returned. “Do not let it obsess you. Focus on action. Focus on intention. Focus on creating good karma. Focus on attracting energy to build a positive aura. Good karma builds protection in our aura and brings grace to our hardships and challenges.”

There was silence for a few moments as the three men returned to their crucifixes. They turned them right side up and one by one carried them to the center of the stage, took a bow and exited.

“Our species always wants to know why.” The everywhere voice returned. There was silence and then a deep belly laugh. “Unable to fully comprehend the cosmic and cosmic intention, we prefer to invent purpose for everything.” There was a brief pause as the curtains closed. “Delete for

a moment the purposes others have given you and that you have created to explain your being. The next act is *Destinies*. In preparation for it I want you to contemplate on the relationship between emotion and mathematical possibility.”

Suddenly the theatre was filled with whispering chatter, and a few people stood up. A loud clap of thunder silenced everyone and those standing sat back down.

“In your reflection focus on the positive, on goodness, and share your thoughts with the people around you.”

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“You look tired,” William squinted to study my eyes. “Are you alright?”

“I am tired, drained to me more precise.”

“Oh you must stay energized for the third act,” Diana slapped the back of my hand.

“The second act was the most potent for me too,” William smiled and shifted his focus to Diana and then back to me. “I think a quick coffee would be just what we need.”

“Hmm,” Diana nodded in agreement and stood up.

Circles of people huddled outside the theatre. I stood on the curb with William and Diana and sipped a coffee. The two drag queens I’d seen before the show joined our circle along with a long haired man with a beard and sandals.

“Well you know,” William said to the hippy with a slight British accent. “If you look at the range of emotions in a mathematical way there is a very definite progression.”

“That is so true,” the hippie’s eyes shifted upward and his head jerked forward like a turkey.

“There are what, seven or eight core emotions?” The drag queen with an obvious wig quizzed the group. His voice was deep and there was no effort to sound feminine.

“Like totally,” the hippy stroked his beard with a nod. “There is like a definite progression.”

“Well now is it truly progression or is it really about duality?” The other drag queen said twirling a clump of hair on the side of her head with a forefinger. The hair was obviously her own, highly stylized and highlighted. Her voice was neither masculine nor feminine and had a raspy quality to it.

“Interesting,” a smile lit up William’s face. “Dualities in opposition, is that what you mean?”

“Hmm,” the drag queen with natural hair nodded. “Like love and hate, happy and sad.”

“It’s not clean,” the drag queen with the wig swung his purse like a hyperactive school boy with a book bag. “Not all emotions are expressed as dualities, and if you consider all of the emotions some of them just don’t fit logically into a progression.”

“But are they true emotion?” William cocked his head. “Some are derivatives. They are not pure.” He shook his head and moved his mouth and tongue as though he tasted something bad. “We need to stay focused on the spiritual aspect of emotion.”

“So you’ve seen this before,” I said changing the subject and mimicked Williams’s expression of tasting something bad.

“Oh yes,” his eyebrows came together and he gave me a stern look. “So what is your view of emotion from a spiritual perspective?”

“I think it is a core method of communication,” I said fighting off a yawn. “And I think emotion is far more expansive and expressive in a spiritual realm than it is on an earthly plane.”

William gave a matter-of-fact shrug and the group continued to chat. I had difficulty following the conversation, and found myself more intrigued by the drag queens than the discussion. The intrigue was metaphorical in the backdrop of the conversation that was taking place about emotion, as I was becoming overwhelmed with feelings. It started with curiosity. I studied the wigged man’s face, his made up eyes, his bleeding lipstick. The curiosity was all consuming. Why would anyone choose such a life? What would that self discovery process be like? I pondered these questions without thought or control and my feelings morphed from curiosity to sadness. I stayed with the sadness. I felt it bubble up from my gut and take residence in my heart. I swallowed and the sadness sunk down again to my gut. I could feel it churning, transitioning from sadness to anger and then to courage. Suddenly I was back in the heart where feelings of courage gave rise to feelings of personal power. The feelings of power intertwined with feelings of fear and shame, and an even stronger feeling of courage settled in my heart.

“Hey,” I gave myself a mental slap. “You are not that drag queen. Why are you in such a state of empathy?”

I found it difficult to resist studying the masculine drag queen’s face and found a history of emotion around his mouth and eyes that confirmed the empathy I was feeling for him. For a moment I became him. I could feel his anger, and oh he was an angry man. His anger scared me. I wished he would focus more on courage than anger. With that thought I stopped feeling anything for him and my attention shifted to the other drag queen. She was naturally pretty. There was a calm acceptance and determination in her face. A feeling of peace and courage settled in my heart as I studied her.

I closed my eyes for a moment and then returned to the conversation. “I don’t know how to think about emotion from a spiritual perspective.” I blurted out in an assertive voice. The empathy I felt for these two people sparked a new energy within me. The caffeine from the coffee was kicking



in too. “When I think about emotion I associate it with a physical response in the body. The two are connected. We hold emotion in our bodies.” I looked at the masculine drag queen. “And we wear emotion on our faces.”

“I know,” the angry drag queen sucked in his lips in a nervous effort to evenly spread the lipstick he was wearing as though make up could cover his anger. “The problem is,” he took on an intellectual air that was cartoonish in drag persona. “Affect definitely has a physical component. The problem that I have in defining emotion that way is that love cannot be considered an emotion. You can see fear, disgust, shame, pride, and a whole range of other emotions on an individual’s face. You can also observe its impact on various parts of the body. You cannot see love.” He laughed briefly. “Not that I am obsessed with definitions, but if love is not an emotion, what is it?”

“That’s the mystery,” William’s eyebrows rose. “And the key.”

\*\*\*\*\* Act 3: *Destinies* \*\*\*\*\*

A feeling of camaraderie filled the air as we took our seats. The curtains opened and revealed the silver screen set back on the stage, similar to act one. From the center of the screen came a swirling ball of red that blossomed swirls of orange, then yellow then green and blue and finally a purple that transitioned to violet. The screen went white, then went whiter, and then became even whiter still. From the brightest white the screen turned into a swirling mass of various colors. It was like watching a fire – color coming from within color and transitioning to another color. I sat and watched with my mouth open.

“Think of emotion as you would color,” the booming voice returned. It was deep and soothing. “There is order and progression in color just as there is order and progression in emotion. It may not fit into a mathematical scheme that is comprehensible to you. Open your heart to the geometric universe. Math is a creative science.”

Beautiful harmonic voices sang about opening the heart. One voice was slightly ahead of the other, and both sang the same line over and over. A peaceful feeling took over my body, and a profound silence filled the room. The screen took on an image that reminded me of stained glass. Light danced on the other side of the screen and then descended like a setting sun, pulling and darkening color as it moved downward. When the light reached the bottom it began to ascend again, saturating each colored pane of glass to produce different hues.

An altar with three small steps seemed to float in from stage left. A triangle of three unlit candles adorned the small altar. From stage right came an older man dressed in a long purple robe. He stood to the right of the altar with palms open.

“Who will come forward to share a journey of opening the heart?”

Silence continued to consume the room for a moment, and then was broken by someone rustling behind me. I resisted the urge to turn and look. Within seconds I could see a woman walking down the aisle toward the stage. It was the pretty drag queen.

“How pretty you are,” the older man said with a broad smile as the woman walked toward him. I wondered if he knew she was a man. Each of them extended arms and clasped hands in front of the small altar. A stage hand appeared with a chair and placed it to the left of the altar. The older man motioned for the woman to sit, and the stage hand returned with another chair that was placed to the right of the altar. The older man sat. “Like us all you are a player and you are played. Tonight we will explore the mystery of the destinies that are created from these interactions, and the transformation journey that becomes open to us.”

The drag queen looked at the audience and gave a playful shrug, then adjusted herself in the chair and looked at the older man. “I’m ready.”

There was a nervous and innocent giggle followed by a serious expression as she studied the small altar that was now floating between and behind them. Her gaze returned to the older man. He gave her a warm, fatherly look



and stood up. He closed his eyes and approached her with arms extended and palms open. His hands motioned around her, about two feet from her body, and he stroked an egg like shape. A faint light became visible around her. He sat back down and the light on the stage grew dim while the light around the drag queen grew brighter.

“Why did you choose this life? What is the opportunity?”

“Well I don’t know,” she slouched in the chair and then sat up straight.

“You do know.”

The drag queen exhaled with a defeated and sad face. She closed her eyes and her face relaxed. Her head cocked to one side and she said softly, “To learn about self esteem. To discover that I am worthy. I am worthy of the respect and kindness of others. I am worth of God’s love.”

“What emotion created motion, sparked the journey, began this transformation?”

“There was fear that lead to self talk about choices. Denial was opportunity. The closet was another opportunity. There was also realization that I was more than the sexuality and gender issues that rattled my brain. I came to realize that I was a spiritual being. I also came to realize that denying my urges and physical nature would inhibit my spiritual growth. I am not a body that possesses a soul, but rather I am a soul that possesses a body. ”

“How did that awareness come about?”

“It’s about what makes me happy, what makes me joyful, what creates a peace within me that makes me want to celebrate this self. However, I learned at a very young age that what makes me happy can be threatening to others. And,” her eyes opened briefly and her eyebrows rose. “They can hurt me.” She rocked slowly too and fro and a smile came over her face. “But the risks are worth it.”

The altar that floated between them drifted to the left and then the right. The first of the three candles was suddenly lit.

“Courage,” the booming everywhere voice suddenly exploded. “The journey to become courageous blossomed from a rainbow of emotion. Like a flame that transforms from yellow to orange and then to blue, this being was motivated by fear and discovered happiness and joy. She is using courage to transform her to another state of awareness.”

The voice stopped and the white light that was around the young drag queen was now filled with vibrant, swirling color.

“With courage comes a change in behavior. Behavior that is in harmony with the soul brings with it a harmonious aura of vibrant color,” the voice continued. “Provided the player’s behavior is not harmful to those she has played.”

“Hmm,” the older man in the purple robe approached the audience with a finger crossing two lips. “And what does this mean for each of us?” His finger returned to his lips and then he released it. “Have the courage to be who you are. Know that courage is a quiet thing. It is about you, the player, not the played. It is about you playing out the duality of your nature, and planning how to play the players. What is in it for them? What pushes their buttons?” There was silence for a moment. “Push them peacefully.” He closed his eyes and bowed his head.

The drag queen was still sitting in the chair, studying the lit candle on the floating altar. The man in the purple robe returned to the seat opposite her.

“The candles with their flickering flames and transitional colors represent the emotions that are transforming you, moving you forward on your journey.” He smiled at the young woman. “Tell me, what other emotions light the remaining candles of transformation for you?”

The drag queen relaxed in her chair. “I don’t know,” she cocked her head and a forefinger twirled at her hair. “Emotions are sort of queer,” she covered

her mouth and started to laugh. There were a few rustling sounds in the audience and the man questioning her began to laugh too.

“In what way?” He asked composing himself.

“Well they morph,” she swayed side to side in the chair. “Sometimes I don’t know what I feel.” She crossed her legs like a man and wiggled the foot that was in the air. “But when I think of transformation,” she paused and her finger stopped playing with her hair for a moment. “It’s about inspiration, you know, and people. I don’t know what word to use to describe the emotion, but it’s about camaraderie. It comes from other people. I don’t know, they encourage me and inspire me and that feeling of not being alone helps me move forward.” She continued to twirl her hair in silence for a moment and then stopped and placed both hands in her lap. “And it’s not just about people doing this for me and encouraging me, it’s also about me doing this for other people.”

“Inspiration is the perfect word,” he closed his eyes and opened them. The second candle on the altar was suddenly lit. “Is there another emotion you can think of?”

The drag queen exhaled loudly and she shook her head. The colors that surrounded her began to fade and soon a dim light surrounded her. The light grew dimmer and the singing voices returned with another refrain of *Open my Heart*. There was a dragging sound on the right side of the stage. Slowly the stage became brighter and an upside-down crucifix was visible beside the man in the purple robe.

“Remember me?” The flick of a match produced a sudden light and a man became visible on the cross. He lit a joint as he slid off it, then motioned to pass it to each of them. They each refused and the man sat on the floor in front of them.

“You were the one on the middle cross, right? The one that talked about personal drama and insanity and being stuck?”

“That’s me,” he said holding his breath and then released a cloud of smoke. “Although it wasn’t me that talked about it,” he sucked on the joint and held his breath again. “That was the spiritual dude on the third cross.”

An intuitive thought came to the drag queen. The thought was a warning. It told her to be careful and not to trust this man. Her face took on a sour look as she studied the blank space surrounding the man sitting in front of her. There was an aura of sadness and distrust, accompanied by a tired feeling. She turned to the man in the purple robe. “I don’t like him. I don’t trust him.” She said frankly as though the other man were not even in the room. “And yet there is a pulling, like a feeling of pity,” her face relaxed for a moment and then took on a reflective look. “There’s an empathy I can’t explain. Part of me wants to run as far as I can from this man, and part of me wants to help in some way.”

The man continued to sit on the floor in front of them and smoke the joint.

“He can’t hear us,” the man in the purple robe assured.

“Really,” the drag queen was still sitting in the chair. She leaned forward with her elbows on her knees and then leaned back slightly and raised one hand to her chin.

“Really,” his eyebrows rose. “He can hear you if you want him to hear you.” He paused for a moment and leaned back. “Empathy is intuitive you know.”

“I’ve always had a sense that there was something psychic going on when I truly empathized with someone else.” Her face took on a smile and she sat back.

“Intuition is not always divine,” his face scrunched as though anticipating pain and his eyes narrowed. “Intuition can be a lie, or rather a non truth.”

“Why did you qualify that? A lie is a lie.”

“No, a lie is intentional. Non truths have no passion about them. They just are.” He smiled and relaxed his face. “Back to the idea of empathy. Intuitive thoughts as well as feelings don’t just come to you, you attract them.”

“I felt that,” the drag queen nodded and studied the two candles on the floating altar. “I felt like I was attracting his drama, like I was pulling it in, and I think that is why I felt threatened and unsafe.”

“There is truth in what you say.”

There was momentary silence. The drag queen studied the unlit candle in anticipation of a sudden flame. A look of disappointment came over her face. “So what do you do?” The drag queen stood up and stretched, then studied her pink fingernails and looked at her feet. A stage hand wheeled in a full length mirror and positioned it in front of the audience. The drag queen approached the mirror and all the audience could see of her was the top of her head and a pair of hands fluffing her hair. “I don’t want to be a player in his drama.”

“Suppose you were, and suppose he did something to offend you, to hurt you in some way?

“Well,” there was silence and a sense that she shrugged at her reflection even though we could not see her. “I would find my way out.”

“What about him? Is this his ultimate fate?”

“Have you ever studied the reflection of a flame?”

“What does that have to do with fate?”

“Well perhaps what we know of him is only reflection. Perhaps there is a higher self that is truly him, and that we do not know.”

“And how do we get to know him? Even more important, how do we get him to understand this and continue his journey?”

The drag queen’s head peered out from the side of the mirror. “Forgiveness.” Her head again disappeared. Hands grabbed the sides of the mirror and the young woman wheeled it toward the altar that was centered in the back of the stage. “Love,” she stood in front of the mirror that now blocked the altar from view. “Love is the ultimate emotion. It is our gift from the cosmic, and the gift we offer others to transform on their journey. Love is the ultimate creator and the ultimate transformer.”

The altar floated to the right of the mirror and the third candle was now lit. It continued to float until it was in front of the mirror and center stage. The audience could see the reflection of all three candles in the mirror.

“Follow the spin of emotion and open your heart to the love recipe,” the booming everywhere voice returned. “It is the ultimate natural law.”

The drag queen stood to one side of the mirror and altar. She was beautiful and smiling. The man in purple stood opposite her. They stood in silence for a moment, then walked toward one another and joined hands. They remained hand in hand for a moment, then dropped hands and left the stage. The lights grew dim until the only light was the three candles and their reflection in the mirror.

\* \* \*

I went outside to smoke a cigarette and there was Karen leaning against the building, just as I left her after the first act.

“What a trip,” I said to Karen in anticipation of talking about the play. I was still stuck in act 2 and wanted to talk about it so that I could mentally move on to act 3.

Karen didn’t say anything but there was a look that said, “I really don’t want to know.”

I sucked on a cigarette and pointed to a woman crossing the street. “Remember her?” I flicked my head in her direction.

“Oh yea,” Karen placed a hand on her hip and nodded.

“Hey,” I studied her face then scanned her body as she approached. “Were you the fat angel on the trapeze?”

“That was me,” she stood before us and rocked on her heels. A broad smile consumed her face.

“Wow, how odd.” I scanned her body once more. “You’re not at all fat.”

“It’s all about perception.” She said with a coy laugh that was almost sexual. “I am an actress, remember?” She looked at me and winked. “And thanks for the compliment.” She looked at Karen and nodded. “Maybe next time.”

“Sure,” Karen nodded with a blank expression.

“So you guys joining us for dinner?”

I looked at Karen and she was still wearing a blank expression. Part of me wanted to go the dinner party, but most of me really had enough. “Thanks, but we are both wasted.”

“Ok,” the woman shrugged and turned to walk away.

“Who was that?” Karen asked slapping my arm as we walked down the street.

“The woman who sold us tickets, remember, she watched us argue and thought we were doing some kind of street act. She came up to us and talked us into buying tickets for a play.”

“Yeah, I remember her coming up to us.” Karen nodded in agreement. “But what’s this about tickets to a play?”

“Never mind,” I laughed. “How about ice cream?”

\* \* \*

I remember lying in bed that night and wondering what it would have been like if I went to the dinner party. I felt guilty about not saying goodbye to William. I liked him. Fragments of the play occurred in my dreams that night, and for nearly thirty years into the future. My feelings for William were mixed. They were physical in an odd way, as the only image of anything physical was a floating head in black and white. My spiritual experience is difficult to describe. There is camaraderie, and at times a joined consciousness. The only way I can describe it is to compare it to sexual energy with the physical component removed.

One day in meditation I asked for more information about William and the name William Atkinson came to me. I remember writing it down and erasing it, writing it down and crossing it out, writing it down and crumbling the piece of paper. Often I confused him with Edward Carpenter, another nineteenth century mystic who had a profound impact on my psychic development. The confusion brought me to a place of denial. My relief from denial came in dreams and deep meditation.

Over the years I read many of William’s books. They intrigued me and upset me. I could not read them sequentially and had to skip around. I needed and longed to talk back, almost push back, following a core desire to assert my view and share my experience and perspective to build a shared understanding.

As I reflect on the attachment I feel to my teachers, I wonder about the nature of my attraction to them and the karmic drama that influenced my spiritual relationships with them. Communion is my desire and my goal, although it may not have been clearly articulated in my words or thought at the time.

Although I long for communion I am very afraid of it. I continually work on understanding and resolving the fear. As I think back on the fear during the experience of Onedin I remember Karen. Perhaps she was not truly there and the experience was just a sequence of dreams, but I wonder if my creation of her in the experience gave me courage, and permission, to continue. I wonder too what subconscious intentions underlie experiences such as this, when I will have the courage for a consciously intended experience, and what I need to do to prepare.

## ESSAY: MEMORY, IMAGINATION & PSYCHIC EXPERIENCE

Some think of psychic experiences as prophetic, other worldly. Others would describe psychic experiences as hallucinations, and a clearly defined feature of schizophrenia. Some think of psychic experiences as a self invented drama to resolve personality issues that were teased out of the subconscious from recent events. Assume for a moment that each of these perspectives is true, that some experiences are truly hallucinations and symptoms of mental illness, that some are the drama of the mind in an attempt to resolve psychological issues, and that others truly are psychic.

If we assume that all of these experiences are within the realm of possibility, and that some experiences truly are psychic, then there must be some feature about psychic experiences that make them different from the other two. A key difference is that psychic experiences are not always self induced, they may involve other personality's as well as information that is from a source beyond self. Another major difference involves the content or nature of the experience. Hallucinations and psychologically inspired experiences may include thoughts of hurting oneself or another person. Psychic experiences never have this feature.

Psychic experiences usually happen in dreams. However, the experience may also occur in meditation, in chant, in the space between breaths. There are many types of psychic experience. One type is about spiritual knowledge. We walk away from these experiences with new information. The information may pertain to a past life experience, information about a cosmic law that we have been contemplating, as well as telepathic thoughts and communication with others. Another type of experience is about foresight and precognition. These experiences are like a sandbox. They let you play 'what if' with an event or situation that is in the process of taking place in your life. This might be a new job, a move, or any number of life transitions. The 'what if' that is most attractive, and most karmically appropriate, becomes a forecast for your waking life.

Emotions can get in the way of recalling a psychic experience. If the result of the experience was a forecast, we may not be consciously willing to

accept it. If it is new information or knowledge, it may be in conflict with our conscious values and beliefs. Sometimes we remember only a portion of the experience. Imagination can be used to tease and taunt the memory, and the experience comes flooding back.

However, sometimes what comes back is not just a flood of memories about the forgotten experience, but rather the creation of a new or expanded experience. For example, I may remember a little snippet of information about a past life in a meditation or dream. When I use imagination to recall some of the details I have forgotten, it triggers an analysis and I find myself rejecting most if not all of what I have imagined. However, in the process of imagining I created an intention. The intention is to find out more about the experience. Inevitably, additional information comes about in another dream or meditation. When it comes, however, it comes with new information. This is because our will brings power to the intention and with it volition.

Another important aspect to keep in mind about psychic experience is the notion of time and place. Some believe that time and space are illusions. If time and space do not exist beyond the mundane world, then why should a psychic experience be bound by them? Perhaps psychic experiences are continually becoming, and need not be thought of as complete or finite events.

The question of time and space brings forward another important aspect; the nature of consciousness during a psychic experience. When fully absorbed in an experience, one assumes the time and place of that experience. Experience, reality, truly is wherever consciousness takes you. A powerful personal example for me involved taking on the identity of a rapist during a psychic experience. I truly believed that I was him. I had a sense for his body being very different then my own, of his clothes not being like mine and not even of my time, but outside of this simple awareness I was the identity of this rapist.

The most difficult aspect of psychic experience is trying to figure out what it may mean. This inevitably requires interpretation. Meaning builds from an interplay of memory and emotion, and requires association with

another experience or prior knowledge to make sense. Consequently, the conclusion we come to today may be very different from the conclusion we come to tomorrow because we may have new knowledge or new experience tomorrow. Was an experience truly a past life, or was it a deep empathy and connection with another being?

Sometimes we are so hungry for meaning and truth that we consult with others for answers. Although another person can be helpful in that they share their perspective based upon their experience and knowledge, no one can truly tell another what a psychic experience means.

The people who provide answers are the flip side of this experience. Sometimes we are so inspired by our psychic experiences that we are compelled to share our personal truth with others, and help others find their truth. There can be great benefit in these relationships, but there is also a need for caution. Two people can have similar psychic experiences, and yet have very different perspectives on what happened and what it might mean. The interplay of personalities and influence has both negative and positive consequences. Positive consequences come about when there is trust and good judgment. Negative consequences come about when perspectives are forced, or not in align with one's personal values. What is true for one may not be true for another.

Truth is relative in the mundane world, and this applies to information received in an intuitive or psychic manner. Just because one receives information intuitively doesn't necessarily mean that it is true. It isn't that knowledge received from the other person is a wrong; it's that another's knowledge is based upon one's mental associations and experience. These experiences may be incomplete, limited or just very different from yours. This doesn't mean that what was communicated to you is a lie. Non truths are different from lies. Lies are intentional. A simple analysis of the source is a good indicator of the level of truth. A telepathic communication with someone in your environment about a mundane matter is very different from a personality in a psychic dream that is helping you to facilitate the answer to a profound question.

Sometimes truth comes from a multitude of experience and it is not relevant to search for truth in a single psychic experience, or one particular aspect of an experience. An attempt to find meaning in it can be a like trying to find meaning in a routine event such as looking for an item in a grocery store. Sometimes it is appropriate to let an experience linger in our consciousness, rather than obsess over meaning.

When we have a strong emotion about an experience, the meaning of the experience may live in how we feel about it. How we feel can motivate us to forget all or part of the experience, or give us permission to integrate the experience into our consciousness and open a door to greater memory and/or continued experience. Imagination can help us play out emotions such as fear, anger or sadness. Imagine what it is like to feel a different emotion or no emotion at all. Let imagination be the mental alchemy that facilitates new experience.



## EXPERIMENT: EXPLORING PSYCHIC EXPERIENCE

1. How did you conclude that a dream or meditation was a psychic experience?
2. What takes the experience out of the realm of the psychological and into the realm of the spiritual?
3. What is your emotional reaction to the experience?
4. Are there elements of the experience that you do not remember?
5. Does the experience have meaning for you? Is meaning relevant, or do you need more detail and continued experiences?
6. Let your imagination finalize the details of the experience, and choose the emotion you want to create as an outcome. What surprises you? What challenges you? Does your reaction to what you imagined create an intention for you? What is it?
7. If there is an intention, frame and release it in meditation.

emotion moves me  
from a state of rest to a state of action

and sometimes i loose all sight  
of the intention of consciousness

in between my dreams was an image of a triangle  
that floated like a screensaver

one wall of the triangle  
is a gateway from an outer chamber  
and it is where i sit

another wall of the triangle  
is an unobstructed fireplace  
with light blue and white flames

the third wall of the triangle  
contains a small table  
adorned  
with three candles  
and a mirror

sometimes i rest by the small table  
and at other times  
i retreat to the outer chamber,  
to study my reflection in a mirror

who am i now?



me

a cognitive spinning wheel  
pumping forward  
thru puddles of  
memory and emotion  
hoping i do not get a flat,  
hoping there is no accident  
no misfortune

me

knowing there will be,  
knowing there is karma  
in multipack favors

me

hoping that whatever happens  
is in harmony  
with all of me,  
and  
that i have the capacity  
to extract learning

me

a puddle of emotion  
splashing up and every which way  
unfocused, then focused;  
controlled,  
flat  
and optimistic

## MY EVOLVING CREED: KARMA

1. I believe in free will and that mental action and behavior produce karma
2. I believe that free will is governed by karma
3. I believe that free will has boundaries based upon individual and cosmic intention
4. I believe that the intention of karma is the brotherhood of humanity
5. I believe that there is individual karma as well as karma on a grander scales
6. I believe that the consequences of karma are either grace or transgression
7. I believe that there is a link between karma, psychic experience and psychic development

Cluster 5:

*Characters Building*

## SUMMARY OF CLUSTER 5: CHARACTERS BUILDING

### *Buckets*

211

In a borderline state between meditation and dream, a discussion takes place about the relationship between past lives and the development of personality. Included in the discussion are spiritual traits and preferences as an aspect of personality. An intention is created to 'bucket' and identify spiritual traits and preferences.

### *The Bell Tower*

221

A series of dreams bring back memories of prior psychic experiences, and discussions about them facilitate a method to identify and assess spiritual traits and preferences as one aspect of personality.

### *Experiment: Reflections on Spiritual Orientation*

240

An experiment in assessing the spiritual dimensions of personality, including: love, experience and belief, communication and initiation, and behavior.

### *Pop Goes the Weasel*

242

A discussion with a Jack-In-the-Box character from recurring dreams leads to a discussion about emotional memories, the nature and types of dreams, and precognition.

### *In Need of a Test*

258

Three respected and trusted teachers from the past join together as a panel in a series of dreams to review a completed written exam. The review becomes an oral exam with probing questions about the nature of death, consciousness and personality beyond death, and first hand experience and knowledge of different planes of existence. The exam is an opportunity to sort out and integrate thought, emotion and experience in a challenging but non threatening way.

*Essay: Spiritual Aspects of Personality* 280  
 Spiritual orientation is discussed as one aspect of personality. A range of spiritual orientation from follower types to initiate types is presented. The interpretation of psychic experience is discussed as the delineator between types, along with preferences for acquiring knowledge and truth.

*My Evolving Creed: Personality* 285  
 A list of relative, personal truths about personality.

**Cluster 5 Poetry:**  
*scenes from my past* 207  
*sometimes there is a crack* 208  
*you always said* 209  
*there were times when* 220  
*an act of contrition* 256  
*spiritual attraction* 279  
*in sleep* 284

scenes from my past  
 sometimes play back in head

i could be  
 riding my bike  
 or sitting in a meeting

i could be  
 meditating  
 or in the middle of a dream

I associate something  
 with something else  
 and the memory clip

plays

like the playback before an exam

sometimes there is a crack  
in time and space  
and i feel like a dancer

automatically i stretch my legs  
and extend my toes  
and on my way up  
from the crack  
i see the fool  
and his little dog

*and who are you now?*

it's not like that  
i am one identity  
but many characters

*and who are the characters?*

me and not me  
my experiences and my past  
and

*and? and?*

the not me people  
who are close to me  
as well as the people i admire

*and so you are always becoming?  
then when is the point  
that you fully become?*

as a personality, well,  
when i am born

again

you always said you choose all the players  
you said you choose them before you even came  
into this life

*i did  
i asked for them all  
my mother  
my father  
my lovers  
all my good friends*

and now one by one the players are exiting

*I know  
but there are a few  
new players coming  
and an army  
of incidentals*

you said your personality  
was a collective you  
and intentionally matched for this life,

*did  
and you know  
the ones that have exited,  
they are part of me now*

you said you wouldn't leave the way you came

*i did, didn't i?*

yeah  
just be careful of those incidentals  
they can bring you down

*or lift you higher*

not without intention,  
yours or combined

## BUCKETS

“I can’t sleep.”

“I know,” a voice in my head whispered back. “Do you want to get up or slip into a meditation?”

I rolled over and stared at the digital clock. “It’s only two forty five. I want to get more rest.”

“What makes you think meditation doesn’t bring you the same, or even better rest than sleep?” The voice was full and no longer a whisper.

“Hmm,” I rolled over onto my back and placed my right hand over my heart and my left hand over my right.

“You’re not even fully awake, although you think you are. This is the best time to meditate.”

“It is.” I took a deep breath and held it for a few seconds, then exhaled. I decided not to have a focused meditation, but rather to play back a chant from my memory and see where it takes me. The chanting began and I was quickly transported to a place outside my imaginary sanctum, a place I’ve created mentally to represent the egregore of the spiritual heritage. I sat alone in the outer chamber of this porch like place. It is both outdoor and indoor at the same time. There is a stone wall behind me. To my left is another stonewall with stairs that descend to a series of doors and eventually to an old, dark and familiar restaurant. To my right is a stonewall with a huge wooden door toward one end that is the entrance to a temple. In front of me is open space and the sound of flowing water. Just beyond and slightly below where I am standing is a narrow river. To the right are a steep hill and a bridge. I stare at the bridge, knowing I have visited this place many times. A rain storm has just ended and the sky is an odd combination of darkness and light. A rainbow appears and I sit on the edge of the porch looking at the sky with my legs dangling over the river below. I can hear someone inside the temple, and the door slowly opening.

“Greetings,” a familiar looking man said as he emerged from the doorway. He was wearing a white robe that went down to and nearly covered his bare feet.

“Where did you find a robe that long?” I looked up and acknowledged that he was taller than I was, and thought about how I have searched but never found a robe that was long enough to reach my feet.

“Well,” he smiled and pulled down the hood that was nearly covering his head. “Come with me and I will get you one.”

I followed the man into the temple and down a small hallway to a closet. He opened the closet door and retrieved a robe. “Enjoy,” he handed the robe to me and I put it on over my shorts and t shirt.

“Thanks,” I walked down the hall toward the door and returned to the outer chamber. I was startled to see the man sitting in a yoga position against the inner wall. I wondered how he had gotten out of the temple faster than I did. His eyes were closed. I took a seat against an adjacent wall a few feet from him, my back straight and my legs fully extended.

His eyes opened. “Like you, I’ve been contemplating the spiritual aspects of personality.” He cocked his head and squinted as he studied my face.

“And here we are” I smiled.

“Hmm,” he nodded. “I can’t believe that a hundred years later the nature versus nurture debate is still going on.” He stroked his white beard. “Maybe it’s driven by the pharmaceutical industry,” he joked. “I mean if there is an inappropriate genetic disposition it can be treated with medication.” He looked me in the eye and then looked away. “Seriously, I am curious to hear your perspective on this.”

“Oh yes, the old debate around whether personality is acquired during a life time,” I raised my eyebrows then gave him a frown. “Or whether it’s innate and you are born with a pre programmed personality.” I could feel my frown flatten and I struggled to put on an expressionless face. “For

most people I don’t think personality is the concern, it’s behavior. People are always struggling to understand and change their behavior. There are schools of thought that preach that we are born a blank slate and that the environment shapes us. And then there’s the gospel of born to be bad, you know, that we are born with certain behavioral tendencies.” I put a finger to my lips and gave him a half smile. “Of course the good and bad are defined by cultural norms, but no one wants to go there.”

“Preaching,” he laughed heartily. “Gospel,” he shook his head and pursed his lips for a moment. “Your choice of words and your tone blatantly express your feelings on the matter.”

“I suppose,” I said laughing. “You see I have always had a hard time believing that psychology is a science, and that attitude has tripped me up both in school and in my career.” I arched my back forward, then stretched my neck backward and rested my head on the stone wall. “So anyway I think it is a combination of the two. The environment and our response to it does shape our personality, but I also think there are certain urges and tendencies that come with us into this life.”

“If there are aspects of personality that are innate, where do they come from?”

“Past lives,” I looked at him as though he had two heads.

“Ok,” he shrugged matter of factly. “We can jump to the idea of soul personality, as that’s really what you and I want to talk about, but before we do let’s clarify exactly what personality is.” He scratched his head and looked me in the eye. “How would you define it?”

“Well, basically, personality is a summation of a person’s traits, preferences, attitudes and beliefs.”

“And the difference between a trait and a preference?”



“A trait has more intrinsic quality, like say patience or humility. Preference for me implies choice. I think traits are a good predictor of preference.” I nodded my head. “Anyway, I think there is a difference.

“I buy that,” he nodded in agreement. “Of course if you look at the literature, traits and personalities are broken into umpteen types.”

“Yes, and no one seems to be in agreement.” I put on my cynical face.

“I think the important thing in quantifying and qualifying,” he stroked his beard. “Is to focus on the idea that personality equates to social skill or adaptability. Personality represents a person’s ability or effectiveness in dealing with the people in his life and his or her environment.” He looked at me with a blank stare. “And it is also an indicator of intention, and that includes spiritual intention. A person who is very spiritual will most likely have very different traits and preferences than someone who is very materialistic.”

“Nice,” I studied his eyes. “And a person who began their journey in this life with materialistic traits and preferences may discover and decide to pursue a spiritual path.” I turned my gaze away from him. “And then discover that there is huge gap between who they are and who they wish to become.” My gaze returned to him and I focused on his eyes. “Hmm,” I imitated his expression as I seemed to know what he was thinking.

“It’s true,” he nodded in agreement. “Psychology focuses too much on the illness perspective, the emphasis is on disability and how to treat it rather than the positive aspects of shaping and enhancing personality so that a person can develop and grow into their full potential.”

“It’s that whole idea that you can’t fix what isn’t broken,” I rested my head on my hand. “And if it’s broken you need a treatment plan.” I looked at the ground. “There is a need for treatment plans too. I learned that lesson. After my corporate stint I worked in a group home writing behavior plans.” I looked him straight in the eye. “Some of these people had a triple diagnosis, and let me tell you they needed treatment.” I looked down again. “And

they also needed medication.” I looked up squinting. “I hated to admit it to myself, for some people a behavior plan just isn’t enough.”

A masculine smile slid from his face and he sat up straight. “You are right and I am not suggesting that mental illness isn’t real and shouldn’t be treated. What I am suggesting is that there is a whole realm of behavior related to personal growth and development. It’s hard to look at that from a treatment perspective. For people like us there is a real gap between psychology and spirit, and a growing need to close that gap.”

“Exactly,” a smile lit up my face. The harmonious thinking between our words had a calming, relaxing effect. “And that brings us to the concept of soul personality.”

“It does,” he cocked his head and stretched his legs. “So where are you on the relationship between past lives and the development of personality?”

“Well I use to be in a pretty solid place,” I took a deep breath and exhaled all at once. “I was on a page that viewed personality as an integration of past lives,” I looked at the ground and then at him. “Simple,” I shrugged. “These are the attributes that you bring into this life, and the rest is shaped and grows based upon the people in your life and your environment.”

“I was on that page too,” he looked at me and then up at the sky. “Soul personality is simply the collective self, and I am still on that page, but there is this huge contradiction.”

“I know,” I said with a smirk. “It’s like if soul is collective, the all without beginning or ending, then there is in actuality only one personality.”

“The ultimate, yes,” I shrugged. “But that’s not the rub for me. I get that. I mean we are all on this journey so I can relate to gradation and eventual integration. It’s the question of development and choice that is of concern.”

“I hear you. I am there too. It’s like in between lives we integrate who we were with who we became, and we plan for the next incarnation, and,” he

scratched his head. "I truly believe that the cosmic wants to provide for us, give us what we need. I mean if we have an incarnation coming that requires certain traits and attributes for us to be successful, then the cosmic will provide for us. Yes?" He shook his head. "Wouldn't it make sense that we approach an incarnation with a personality that is in harmony with it, rather than one that has evolved and acquired certain traits based upon prior life experiences?"

"Or perhaps we intentionally evolved to that point," my eyebrows rose and held their position. "Think about the zodiac for example. I mean the intention behind that concept is that we experience every aspect of the zodiac, every slice of life."

I let my eyebrows fall to their normal position and my mouth relaxed.

"Perhaps it isn't so rigid," he shook his head. "Maybe there isn't a dictate that orders you to be this, and then that and then that in any particular sequence."

"Makes sense," I said coyly. "Taste it all but at your own pace, at the beat of your own drum." I closed my eyes briefly and opened them. "Hmm," I said wearing his smile. "Thank you."

"And thank you," his eyes grew wide and he gave me my smile in exchange. "Amazing how we move together in thought."

I placed the hood over my head and I closed my eyes. We sat in silence for an indefinable amount of time, then my eyes seemed to open automatically. I noticed my friend's eyes were closed. I wondered if I should break the silence, and decided it would be all right if I did. "Buckets," I announced quietly and returned to silence.

My friend was silent for a bit longer. "And you are?" He was suddenly alert with wide eyes and his arm and open palm were extended toward me.

"Ummm, I am a Cancer," I hesitated. "Actually, I'm not fluent in astrology so I don't know that Cancer is a good example."

"Still a bucket," he made a sour face and nodded his head. "Still sets up a construct, a predictable set of behaviors." He held the nod for a moment longer and then released it.

"You?"

"Aires," he clutched one knee.

"Bet you're an INFP." I said with an inhale and the intake of air filled me with an expression of the essence of this man.

"Technically I'm an ENFP, but the E is on a cusp. I identify as an I." He took in air with an open mouth and I sensed an influx of understanding concerning the attributes of an I.

"Oh," I chuckled. "Then you are an I," my eyes grew wider and I tilted my head back slightly as I stared at him. He could see that I was in awe.

"Well," he chuckled back. "Does it surprise you that I know what you are talking about?" He broke into a laugh and his face morphed into a serious expression. "How has that bucket helped you in understanding who you are, in making your way through this incarnation?"

"Some of it is about denial, but denial is part of the journey too." I paused for a moment to think. "I guess what Jung and Myers Briggs did for me was to give me a framework. The startling discovery for me was how I make decisions. For along time I was in denial about my preference for feeling over thinking. I make decisions based upon the impact on people. I look at the data piece too, but the real driver is around people."

"And why the denial? What is that about?"

"Well," I paused with a finger to my mouth and a smirk. "I had this subconscious perspective that making decisions based on their impact on people was not of value. My father, everyone in my family, are thinking types. Their preference was to make decisions based upon impersonal

analysis and logic. For years I had a tendency to make decisions this way too, but I never felt comfortable, I always had this nagging voice.”

“You probably developed some very solid analytical skills as a by product of that experience.”

“Absolutely,” I nodded. “And that leads me to one of my core issues around buckets. People set up stereotypes and have expectations about your behavior or personality that simply are not true. I have some pretty solid problem solving skills, but around thinking types I find myself in a position to prove my myself.”

“I am a feeling type too, but to be honest I am not very analytical in my approach toward anything.” He gave me a broad smile. “I have had that same experience though around assumptions and values. Like you I am an N and have a preference for using my intuition rather than my senses when I take in information. For along time I had this feeling that I was doing it all wrong, that my approach was stupid or invalid.” He looked down and then at the sky. My parents, my family, they were mostly touchy types. Not only were they huggers and kissers, the whole world and everything in it was perceived based upon the five senses. To be an intuitive, to look for possibilities and relationships in the world around me, well, that was always viewed as a little flakey.”

“So the bucket, that intuitive label, helped you figure out who you really were and to accept it.”

“Absolutely,” he nodded. “We’ve both learned that being labeled, fitting into a bucket, can be really hurtful. Not only do people make assumptions about you that can lead to false expectations, you can develop false beliefs and expectations about yourself.”

“Especially if the bucket has negative connotations.” I removed the hood and stretched my legs. “That’s the issue I have always had with psychology, and with all the psychic stuff out there too. People have a way of letting a framework, a construct, become a focus of identity. It sets up a belief structure, and if the belief structure has negative elements, you are going to pull those toward you and you will experience what you believe.”

“Core mystical concept,” he nodded his head. “Thoughts are real. Believe it and it will be.” He shrugged and looked me in the eye. “So would we be better off if we didn’t place ourselves in any buckets at all?”

“I don’t think so,” I lamented with a hesitant face. “Buckets help us understand who we are and can encourage us to move in the right direction.”

“Buckets also help us understand differences. They can take away the edge we sometimes feel around others.”

“So why hasn’t anyone invented a bucket system that will help us understand our spiritual traits and preferences?”

“Surprise, surprise, I’ve been thinking that too. Wouldn’t it be great if there were a framework that would help us understand where we are in our relationship with the divine?”

“You and I can create that framework,” I nodded. “The thing to consider is purpose. The intention can easily slip into predicting behavior, and setting up belief structures that may be false or negative.”

“But we agree that is not our objective,” there was a look of excitement on his face. “The intention is twofold. One is around the idea of awareness and understanding. The other has to do with visualization and planning.”

“Hmm,” I nodded with a look of contentment. “Intentional behavior is quite different from reactionary behavior.”

there where times when  
the thought of God  
and the cosmic  
brought about fear and  
suspicion brought me to religion's door

*tell me what to believe  
tell me what is true*

there where times when  
courage brought about inquiry  
and guilt brought me back  
to religion's door

*a forfeiting of self esteem  
to be forgiven*

there were times when  
i felt worthy of God's love  
and the quest for truth  
brought me to intellects' door

*tell me what you believe  
tell me what you think*

there were times when  
i tested what you thought  
and what you believed

*it wasn't the same for me*

there were times when  
i was worthy of initiation  
and experience

*and belief was transformed to truth*

and there are times when  
i am not worthy of initiation

*safely interpreted as 'not ready'*

## THE BELL TOWER

It was an old Victorian house with a bell tower and one of my best friends growing up lived there. There was a gothic element to it when they first moved in, and sections of it were in need of great repair. At first they all lived on the first floor, and then over the years as money became available they renovated the second and third floors. White walls and natural wood colors transformed the house from its gothic image to a cheerful projection of the twentieth century. The kitchen is the room I remember most. It was very long and dark at first, but then they put a counter in the middle and added windows to brighten it up. There was a back staircase in the kitchen too, and I used that one instead of the one in the living room to get to my friend's room. He was the first to explore the second floor. He did not care if it was renovated, and in fact when it finally did get renovated he moved to the third floor. There was an attic too. Toward the end of high school he took a room that was near a stairway that went to the attic. The stairway went right through the attic to the bell tower. I don't know why we called it the bell tower, because there was no bell. It was an open space that was about six feet square with a three foot high lattice wall around it, and a roof that overhung the wall on all four sides.

"So was it high?" A small voice asked from behind me.

"I didn't know you were here," I looked at the man in the white robe. His hood was over his head and I could barely see his face. He approached me from an archway inside the circular tower that contained us and stood next to me.

"Not too high," I took a step forward and leaned on the edge of a wall that reached the center of my chest. "About like this," I glanced down at the cathedral below and then at him. There were spires to the right that climbed toward puffy white clouds.

"Beautiful sky," my friend said looking up as I again looked down at the top of the cathedral. "I didn't mean to intrude on your thoughts."

“You weren’t,” I looked at him and stepped back. “We have a way of communing. When I project thoughts like that one about the bell tower, well, you seem to be resonating in the same place and you pick up on it.”

“So did you fall?”

“Why do you ask that?” I asked rapidly and took a seat against the wall. There was bit of wind and I placed the hood of the robe over my head.

“I just had that sense,” he said calmly and looked at me. I could feel him searching for my eyes, which he could not find because of the way the hood fell.

“It didn’t happen, not there,” I pulled the hood back slightly and looked in his direction. “It’s the oddest thing,” I shook my head. “When I think back on that house I have memories of falling from that bell tower, but truthfully that did not happen.”

He looked at me in silence.

“There was something about that house, about that bell tower, that brought me somewhere else.” I stared into space. “I remember dreaming about it too. But in the dreams the falling was accompanied by an urge to fly. There was fear mixed with courage and an awesome discovery that I could fly. There were others on the bell tower too. I was so happy to be in their presence, to be one of them. And after I learned to fly it was like, well, I was one of them. There was no separation between them and me.”

My friend cocked his head and studied me with a smile that encouraged me to continue.

“Until I woke up,” I smirked and my eyebrows rose.

“How was your sense of existence different after the dream?”

“I was more hopeful. It was like remembering something from a distant past, but the memory is more about feeling than detail. The feeling is one of falling and rising, and with it a sense that I am part of something

grander than self. There is something too right before the waking up part, a sense that I am headed in the right direction and on the right path. There is hopefulness about finding truth, and a sense that an experience of self is a necessary part of the journey.”

“Umm,” he nodded. “But you want to go back.” His nodding became more intense and then stopped. “I have a similar feeling. It’s like being in a comfortable nest and then finding yourself alone but with this collective memory.”

“And you want to go back there.”

“And we do. In our dreams.” He looked at me and sat in silence for awhile. “So the last time we were together we talked about buckets, the categories that we sometimes put ourselves into to understand who we are and how we approach this journey.” He looked me in the eye. “So have you given thought to a framework that can help us understand our spiritual traits and preferences?”

“Yeah I have, and it brings me to a place in the bell tower. It’s hard to explain.”

“Well let’s play with it. Close your eyes and imagine that bell tower.”

In an instant I was there. Familiar faces surrounded me, became me. I could feel myself falling.

“What do you feel in the fall?”

“I am calling for God. In the call there is a collage of emotion about other people who told me about God, told me what to believe. There is a thankfulness that transitions to helplessness that becomes an anger. The anger melts into curiosity and wonder, and then courage. From the courage comes a wonderful sense of worthiness.”

“And then you start to fly.”

“Yes. And in that ascension there is a knowing that God isn’t separate from me, God is part of me. At the same time there is a communion with like minds, beings who seem to be in the same place energetically and with whom I want to share.”

“So you and this group of beings have a unique spiritual orientation.”

“We do,” I opened my eyes. “I don’t know that we want to take this to the point of creating buckets.” I looked at him. “But I think there are certain questions that an individual can reflect upon to help them figure out where they are in their journey, and the best way to move forward.”

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“Give me a question.”

“It’s not a question,” I looked at him and put a finger to my lips. “It’s a statement. Along with the statement is some sort of scale, probably a one two three kind of thing, and I think the individual is the one who attaches words or values to the one two three rating.”

“So give me the statement.”

“I am worthy of God’s love.”

“Care to give me your rating?”

“Well,” I thought about it. “I changed my mind. I think it’s a seven point scale. The first three ratings are in the negative, the second three in the positive and the middle point is neutral.”

“Ok, and your self rating?”

“I think I came into this incarnation somewhere between a positive one and two, and during this incarnation I think I have moved to between a 2 and 3.” I looked him in the eye. “You?”

“Same.” He looked at me with a blank stare. “Exactly.”

“Anything you would change about the statement?”

“Well I got to thinking about God as separate from me when you first asked the question, or rather made the statement, and then I got into thinking about God being part of me.” He scratched his head. “I think self love needs to be part of the statement.”

“Ok, then the statement becomes ‘I am worthy of God’s love and loving myself’.”

“Nice,” he smiled. “So what do you do with that rating?”

“Acknowledge it. Work toward a goal. Try to figure out if there are obstacles and the best way to approach them.”

“And obstacles could mean karma?”

“Yes,” I nodded. “Conditions, situations set up in this life.”

“Um, I feel I have worked through a lot of karma but I still have a ways to go.”

“Can you isolate those karmic opportunities relevant to loving God and loving self?”

He was silent for a moment and a slow nod came forward. “I think I can,” the nodding stopped slowly and he looked me in the eye. “It’s a wonderful topic to address in meditation.”

“And I think we should do that,” I leaned back and placed my head firmly against the wall. “But before we go there I think there are two related statements to consider.”

“Go for it.”



“The first statement is: ‘The people in my world, my tribe, are in about the same place in terms of loving God and loving themselves. They are a positive influence in my life.’ The second statement is: ‘My physical environment, the earth, plants, animals, as well as the materialism around me, provide inspiration and opportunity to commune with the divine and express love’.”

“Wow,” his eyes grew wide. “Those statements will really help to have a focused meditation.”

A gentle music accompanied by the sound of the sea and birds came from all around us. We sat quietly and then each slipped into a meditation reflecting on love. After a short while the music stopped and I sensed my friend opening his eyes.

“Care to share?” I tilted my head to one side and looked at him.

“There is a wonderful feeling of pride and progress,” he said looking at me. “I thought about it in terms of my distant past and recent past as well as right now,” he rocked very quietly back and forth.

“I did a similar thing,” I shook my head. “But the interesting aspect for me was around people. Sometimes the people around me are in a very different place, but that doesn’t have to be negative. What I routinely have to consider is influence. Do the people around me have a positive or negative influence? Do I have control? Where is there opportunity?”

“Opportunity is the key isn’t it?”

“Yes, and it’s usually that quiet little voice within that will give you hints about opportunity.”

“How about a walk and perhaps a discussion about the next statement?”

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We wandered thru the Cathedral and stumbled into a large kitchen. It was oddly similar to the kitchen that was in my friend’s house with the bell tower. Against one wall was a metal table with a yellow formica top. There were two chairs on each side of the table, and two in front. We sat on each side of the table. A few feet away was a large window and we could see a small courtyard and another spire that climbed to the sky. The afternoon sun cast dancing shadows on a portion of the spire. I glanced to the side instead of straight at them and a host of faces moved in and out of the light. One of the faces looked like my friend’s mother; a long thin face with a mouth slightly open, a wave of hair neatly tucked back on the top of her head. It was a look of encouragement, but it also carried with it a sense of supervision in a parental sort of way.

“It’s about belief,” my friend crossed his legs and adjusted his robe.

“What,” I was startled and withdrew my attention from the shadows.

“Do you mean belief or do you mean truth?” I asked thinking about the shadows and what they truly were.

“Belief is part of the journey toward truth.”

“A-yeah,” a guttural New England sound automatically came from me with a sucking in of breath. I sat in silence for a few moments. “Here is the first statement concerning belief. My understanding of cosmic law and the nature of the universe is based more on experience and knowledge than belief.”

My friend sat in silence and then erupted. “Here is the second statement. My sense of truth concerning cosmic masters and other entities is based more upon feelings within and my personal experience rather than dogma or intellectual speculation.”

I smiled and my eyes closed. “The third statement is this. I am open to psychic and paranormal experience, and although I may be fearful my love for God provides me with courage and fills me with inquiry.” I opened my eyes and looked at my friend. “Oh my,” I leaned back in the chair. “I found



that I was evaluating myself at the same time that we were creating those statements.”

“Me too,” he said with one foot on the chair. “Care to comment?”

“You first. I went first last time.”

“Well,” he squeezed his foot and then put his leg to the floor. “I know where I would like to be, and as much as I can imagine it I also know where I am. I am more on the experience page than intellect, yet I side with intellect in the face of dogma. I’ve become more courageous, but there is this need within to pull the paranormal into the realm of self to understand it.”

“And you get stuck,” I said squinting. “I know because I am in the same place. There’s this shift that goes on that carries with it a theme of abandonment. I mean I don’t always recall psychic experiences, and even when I do my limited perceptual ability brings up doubt.”

“And with the doubt comes a question of intention.” I looked at him and then looked down. “I know because I am in the same place.”

“Intention brings with it another level of questioning.” He wore my expression and squinted at me, then lightly rapped at the table with the forefinger on his right hand. “It has to do with the idea of initiating psychic experience.”

“You mean control,” I laughed out loud.

“Well partly,” he chuckled and straightened himself in the chair. “But seriously there is an important question here about intention. Are your psychic experiences initiated by you or do they just happen?”

“Well both,” I said defensively. “Assuming there is a me greater than me, there are times when this independent self needs to be forewarned.”

“I know,” he said quietly. “Aside from pre-cognition, are your psychic experiences predominately initiated by you?”

I started to shake my head and then stopped. “If you take away the sudden hunch, the pre cognition stuff, I guess it’s 50/50. The stuff I don’t initiate happens in dreams.”

“I’m about in the same place,” he moved a finger to his lips. “But I think we need to be careful about how we interrupt what is and is not initiated. Sometimes when I am looking for a psychic response or impression the result is not instant.”

“And sometimes the intent is not conscious,” I scratched my chin and my legs automatically started bouncing up and down. “That’s the tricky part.”

“That’s it,” his eyes grew wide. “Sub conscious intentions are the ones that bubble to the surface, and yet we choose not to acknowledge them.”

“So the abandonment and trust stuff that we talked about earlier isn’t just about limited perceptual ability, it’s about emotion and integrating truth.” My legs suddenly stopped their automatic jitter. “There’s an emotional element.” I stood up and walked to the window. “I thought I saw someone up there.” I pointed to one of the spires.”

“Really,” my friend cocked his head and came over to look. “How about if we go up there and continue our discussion. I think we are done with belief.”

“Actually,” I looked at him. “That last discussion leads into where I would like to go next.”

“Where’s that?” He headed for the back door and I followed.

“Communion.”

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We ascended a circular staircase in silence, occasionally glancing at the landscape and the glorious sky. There was a New England look about it.

Giant evergreens lined the hills in the distance. Although the look was New England, the feel was South West. A bright sun brought about an aura of grand openness, and with it a feeling of being connected to nature. As we continued to climb we noticed a door a few feet above us, and although we hadn't discussed it there was an agreement that we should explore what was behind it. As we approached I could see that the door was arched and the top was open to the sky. Large ornate brass hinges and a door knob framed by an etched brass plate seemed to welcome us. I opened the door and we entered a rooftop garden with Eucalyptus trees and free flowing rose bushes in each corner. In the center were circular rows of pavers in muted colors, and two small stone benches that were positioned opposite each other. We wandered through the garden and then sat across from each other on the benches.

"So what do you mean by communion?" He leaned back on his hands and studied the sky.

"Well it's about sharing, camaraderie." A wave of Eucalyptus flooded my nostrils. I took a deep breath and the sweet smell of the roses mingled with the Eucalyptus.

"It's about being open to the inspiration of others." I exhaled and relaxed my shoulders. "And by others I am including cosmic inspiration, and beings other than those of the flesh."

His body arched and then slumped into a u and he studied me. "It's also about initiation."

"It is," I cocked my head and looked away. "But that initiation requires you to not only look within, but to open yourself to the cosmic influence of others."

"An egregore," he smiled. "On a personal or individual level, with a specific lesson or intent." He looked down and then straight at me. "So go ahead, craft the statement."

"I actively seek and participate in initiations that were designed to transform theoretical knowledge into personal enlightenment."

"Nice," he squinted. "But something goes before it, something about the search for an initiatic order that enables the initiation to take place."

"Go," I nodded and my eyes grew wide. "You are onto it."

"I seek like minds as well as the camaraderie of advanced masters for instruction and initiation."

"And another statement," I said as I continued to nod. "Initiation brings about an integration of my thoughts and emotions that become a personal enlightenment."

"So where are you on all of that?" He stood up straight.

"I'm pretty solid on this one," I looked him in the eye. "You should be too. I mean how many years have we spent in seeking and participating in initiation?"

"It's over 20 for both of us, right?"

"Absolutely." I leaned back on my hands. "There is one more area to explore," I looked up at the sky and then at my friend. "It's probably the most challenging," I sat up straight and then rocked forward with a nod.

"Behavior," my friend rocked toward me and continued the nod.

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"So would you say that your behavior is driven more by intuition, or by reason?"

"Hmm," I took a deep breath through my nostrils and again enjoyed the mixed aroma of rose and eucalyptus. "I use reasoning a lot, but you know when I think about it my reasoning is inspired by intuition."

"You didn't answer the question."

"It's a fifty fifty." I tilted my head. "You?"

He nodded without saying a word. "Interesting that your reasoning is inspired by intuitive thought," he looked me in the eye. "So would you say that from intuitive thought you develop conscious intention?"

I could feel my forehead wrinkle as I contemplated the question. "Yeah," I said in a tone that was more like maybe and I continued to think. "Yes," I shook my head with firm affirmation. "Absolutely, that is what I strive to do."

"Me too," he nodded. "But it's been a rocky road. I mean over the years I have become more intentional. In the beginning I was more impulsive, but as I grew older I came to realize that sometimes things weren't instant."

"Sometimes they are. Sometimes you just need to act." I leaned back and swung my legs to and fro. "But sometimes there are consequences to your actions that you don't expect. Sometimes you need a plan."

"For me it also has to do with changing the way I think, and the way I behave."

"So do conscious intentions inspire you to change your behavior?"

"Inspire," his eyes were penetrating. "More like demand."

"It comes down to aligning values," I placed my feet on the bench and clasped my arms around my legs. I pulled my legs toward me and then extended them outward without changing my clasp. I could feel the pull and resistance in my arms, and in the distance I could hear bells.

"You mean living your truth," he stood up and motioned toward the other end of the courtyard where there was another door. He placed the hood from his robe over his head and walked toward the door. I positioned my hood over my head as well, then stood up and followed him.

"You know," I said as I approached him. "We said we were not going to create buckets, but instead create statements that would help us reflect upon the spiritual aspects of personality."

"Make no mistake," he stopped walking and stood in place. "What we created is an invitation to create buckets on a very personal level that helps facilitate personal growth."

"And what buckets have you created?"

"There are four of them."

"I have four too."

"Give me the first."

"The first is a religious personality." I said approaching him. "One who prefers to be told about God. One who prefers dogma and a set of rules to abide." I stopped and stood beside him. "So what is the second bucket?"

"The bucket of the first personality is the believer." He thrust his lips forward then pressed down on them with an erect forefinger. "The second is the doubter. This personality type vacillates in anger. He is a believer and a disbeliever at the same time. His anger at times is directed at the cosmic, and other times it is directed at other people. Ultimately, the anger is self directed."

"He predicts the nada," I looked up and then at my feet. "And then becomes it."

"The next bucket is difficult to label."

"What are its attributes?"

"They are about inquiry, investigation. It's beyond believe and disbelief. It's a about a quest for truth."

“And the forth bucket, is this the personality that has found truth?” I looked at him and then at the door a few feet away from us.

“Not for me,” he shook his head. “The fourth personality is you and I, initiates on the path.

I smiled and said nothing for a moment. “What I like about the buckets is that they give me an opportunity to affirm my personality, my spiritual orientation. They also inspire me to consider where other people are around me, and what I need to do to stay on the path that I have chosen.”

“For you,” he winked flirtatiously. “As well as those around you.”

“Hmm,” I stepped forward and could again hear bells in the distance.

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The door slowly opened as we approached it. When we got there I could see a ledge that overlooked a chapel. In the distance beyond was a bell tower.

“Imagine flying there.”

“That’s just what I was thinking,” I closed my eyes and I felt myself moving through space. When I opened my eyes we were both at the bottom of the stairway in the kitchen of my childhood friends’ house. We walked up the stairs to the attic door, and then ascended up another set of stairs to the bell tower. There were people up in the tower, and as we approached I could see more people out on the roof. A flood of memories came rushing at me. I was fifteen years old and it was the summer the media invented the hippie. My childhood friend was home alone for the summer and the house was filled with far out drifters from the West coast. They were a few years older than we were, and from what I remember a lot more street savvy.”

“So by far out do you mean they were stoned?” My friend in the robe startled me. Suddenly we were out on the roof and there were people all around us engaged in private conversation.

“Some,” I nodded. “But some were not. There was a spiritual sincerity about some of these people that is difficult to describe. I remember lying on the floor with a roomful of people and listening to this long haired man who brought the group through a guided meditation. We did a yoga exercise that had us concentrate on each part of the body to achieve a relaxed state.

“Is your childhood friend here? Where is he?”

“Oddly, he is not a part of this memory.” I pursed my lips and looked down from the edge of the roof. “After that series of summer parties we went back to high school. I sort of lost touch with my childhood friend. He got involved in selling drugs, and it wasn’t nickel dime stuff. He was frequently on a plane doing some kind of run. Some of the people from that summer were involved. I think they used him because he was under age.”

“How sad,” my friend in the robe scratched his head. “What happened to him?”

“Don’t know,” I shrugged. “I remember him telling me that he knew how to use heroin and not get addicted.” I wrinkled my brow. “And in the beginning I think it was true for him. I mean, I didn’t know him as a drug addict. I think that did happen, but it was some time later, after we graduated.”

“Tell me about some time later.”

“It was toward the end of college,” I smiled. “I tried to call him and couldn’t get in touch. Then friends and friends of friends told me that he was in all kinds of trouble. The family got an unlisted number, and then a new number. People would show up at the house, some of them from that summer in high school. His parents finally sold the house and moved. Someone gave me their new number and I called. His mother didn’t know where he was or what he was doing.”

“And you never heard from him again?”

"Nope." I looked him in the eye and glanced at the people on the other side of the roof. They were a very different crowd than the people sitting on my side of the roof. "Memory is so imperfect," I said looking at my friend. There are two things going on here; one is a series of dreams, the other a series of psychic experiences. They are intertwined, and both of them have to do with the development of my personality from a spiritual perspective."

"How do you want to talk about it? Would it be better to talk about the blended experiences, a gestalt approach kind of thing? Or just focus on each separately?"

"I was a kid, a teenager," I looked him the eye. "I can't really focus on detail, it was so long ago." I shook my head. "I guess the disturbing part of all of this is why I am even recollecting these experiences."

"Because you started to delve into the development of your personality. The dreams and the psychic experiences were a turning point for you." He leaned back on his elbows and studied the sky. It was a clear night and the stars seemed very distant, but very crisp and very bright. "Try talking about your feelings rather than specific content."

"The night sky was just like this," I took a deep breath and I leaned back on my elbows as well. "What do I feel?" I said with an exhale. "The feeling comes at me like flipping through cards in a Tarot deck. In dream time there is me the fool. Some of the people on the roof are trying to trick me. It's a warning dream. It's a warning dream about deceit."

"And the psychic aspect of what was going on. What are you feeling about that?"

"It's the tower. You know the card with the flames coming from the tower and the people falling. I am one of the people falling."

"And what are you feeling in the fall?"

"I am feeling pushed. In the tower, when I was there, I was so happy, I was so content. There were people around me, but only occasionally was I separate from these people. It's like we were a combined entity. Suddenly it was time for me to leave, and I didn't want to leave."

"Give me another card."

"The six of cups. You know," I smiled and made a little laugh. "The one with the little munchkins in hoods. One is holding a cup with a white flower. He is starring in the direction of a woman and she is intensely staring back." I made another little laugh. "Funny thing is, the two are not staring at one another. They are sort of remorseful and starring off into space."

"Who is she?"

"I don't know, but she is with me, she is part of me as I am falling."

"Then what?"

"I don't know," I gave him a frustrated look. "It's not like I am retrieving from a database," I said with a giggle. "I guess there was a pause and then I slipped into a dream about the house and the bell tower and the people I met that summer."

"And it wasn't a one time event, was it?"

I shook my head in the negative. "Well perhaps the psychic part only happened once," my head paused in reflection. "But the dreams continued."

"You mentioned flying earlier. What was the flying about?"

"Dream stuff," I tilted my head. "When someone on the roof tried to talk me into doing something I didn't want to do I would fly away. I had this wonderful sense of what was right for me, and it gave me an exhilarated feeling that made me powerful."

“And when you flip the deck in search of a card that summarizes the whole experience, what card comes up?”

“The ace of cups,” I sit up straight and look at him. “It’s a single open palm that is holding an overflowing cup.”

“So there is a sense of integration and perfection along with that power. ”

“Sense is the perfect word. It isn’t knowing and it isn’t feeling. It’s just a sense. And the sense is bigger than me.” I exhaled as though I had taken a drag on a cigarette. “It’s a queer combination of an actual psychic experience, an incomplete memory of that experience, and subconscious efforts to actualize what happened in a series of dreams.”

“So what’s the integration about?”

“It’s a sharing and blending of personalities.” I stood up and walked toward the bell tower that was a few feet above us. I reached upward for the edge of the small wall that was the tower, then hoisted myself up over it.

“Why now?” My friend asked after he hoisted himself up as well. “What’s the significance?”

“Well,” I looked at him and then headed down the narrow stairs to the attic. “Now isn’t specific to the moment.”

“Um,” I heard him mutter and I imagined him nodding behind me.

“Now can be understood as the distance or merging of soul personalities.”

“You look so sad all of a sudden.”

“That merging isn’t just about taking. It’s about giving too.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well my childhood friend, the one I’ve been talking about, maybe there were ways I could have helped.”

“Maybe,” my friend shrugged. We were standing in a narrow hallway on the third floor. The steps to the attic were behind us and in front of us were a series of closed doors. “And maybe not; but if you go with the thought you just expressed about now you can change that.” He cocked his head and stood in reflection, then leaned against the wall with one arm behind him. “Your comments about now are really about time, and there are implications about space too.”

“I know,” I nodded and leaned against the wall beside him. “Time and space, we created them to understand and describe the journey from individual consciousness to shared consciousness and beyond.”

“So rewind in thought and be intentional,” he stood up straight. “Thoughts inspire.”

## EXPERIMENT: REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL ORIENTATION

**Part 1:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-3 for each of the following statements in columns A, B and C.

Ratings: 1= *Disagree* 2= *Neutral* 3 = *Strongly Agree*

Columns: A = *When I Came Of Age In This Incarnation* B = *Where I Am Now*

C = *Where I Would Like To Be*

Love	A	B	C
1. I am worthy of God's love and loving myself.			
2. The people in my world, my tribe, are in about the same place in terms of loving God and loving themselves. They are a positive influence in my life.			
3. My physical environment, the earth, plants, animals, as well as the materialism around me, provide inspiration and opportunity to commune with the divine and express love.			

Experience & Belief	A	B	C
1. My understanding of cosmic law and the nature of the universe is based more on experience and knowledge than belief.			
2. My sense of truth concerning cosmic masters and other entities is based more upon feelings within and my personal experience, rather than dogma or intellectual speculation.			
3. I am open to psychic and paranormal experience, and although I may be fearful my love for God provides me with courage and fills me with inquiry.			
4. Aside from precognition, my psychic experiences come about more from conscious rather than sub conscious intention.			

Communion & Initiation	A	B	C
1. I seek like minds as well as the camaraderie of advanced masters for instruction and initiation.			
2. I actively seek and participate in initiations that were designed to transform theoretical knowledge into personal enlightenment.			
3. Initiation brings about an integration of my thoughts and emotions that become a personal enlightenment.			

Behavior	A	B	C
1. My actions come about more from intuition than reason.			
2. Spiritual insight and intuitive thoughts inspire me to change my behavior, and sometimes to initiate new behavior.			
3. I use intuitive thoughts and inspirations to develop conscious intentions.			
4. My intentions are aligned with my values and I live my truth.			

**Part 2:** Review how you rated yourself in each of the above areas, and place check marks that best describe your spiritual orientation in the appropriate columns. (Example: A check in column A for the 'Follower' description indicates that I came into this incarnation as follower. A check in column C for the 'Initiate' description indicates that this is where I would like to be.)

Orientation	A	B	C
1. Follower: individuals who prefer dogma and other people to interpret and explain spiritual truth; behavior is motivated by following a set of rules			
2. Doubter: individuals who vacillate between religious believe and disbelief; behavior is motivated by a need to question the rules and the dogma			
3. Spiritually Curious: individuals who have an awareness that there is ultimate truth, and who have begun a journey of investigation and exploration			
4. Initiate: individuals who are inspired to integrate knowledge and experience and have identified and follow a specific spiritual path			

**Part 3:** Identify significant differences and reflect upon 1) where you should celebrate success 2) and any areas of opportunity.



## POP GOES THE WEASEL

It began at the end of Autumn Lane, a street that ran parallel with the house I grew up in. There were no trees on the street back then, as the contractors cleared the land before putting in the development. It was a desert of black macadam and would be lawns with scattered houses in between. There were three types of houses in the development; ranch, split level and colonial. We lived in a ranch that was a model home on the main road and the swamp portion of our backyard ran parallel with Autumn Lane about a third of the way down. At the end of the macadam desert of Autumn Lane was a forest.

“Hey,” I yelled into the woods at the end of the road. I wore my father’s face as I yelled. It was filled with alarm and courage. I stood in the circle and studied the shadow that lingered between two houses, and when I saw him move I ran into the woods after him. A few feet into the woods was a run down log cabin that older kids would play in. It had a flat log roof with a small square door at the corner of one end that was made of rotting white plywood. The door suddenly opened and a head popped out and went back in like a jack-in-the-box.

“Hey you,” I yelled arrogantly. “Are you trying to tease me again?”

The small door opened and again the head popped out. It proudly turned a full three hundred and sixty degrees, and I the voyeur stood with my mouth open as it went around. He looked like a self animated puppet and was dressed like the joker in a deck of cards. A funny hat with three pointed pieces of fabric flopped over his head; one landed on each ear and the third hung over his nose and landed on his upper lip. All of a sudden the head retreated and the door slammed shut.

“I know you,” I said haughtily as I approached the log cabin. “You’re Julius Jingle.” I climbed on top of the cabin and sat on the door so he couldn’t get out.

“That’s your invention,” he said with a laugh. There was an edge of nervousness in his words.

“What?” I asked defensively and wanted to take back my tone.

“You took your time about it, but the idea of an entity without a label was just too empty. You thought of me as Julius Jingle, King of the Elves.”

“Yeah,” I peered at him through a crack in the logs. “And that’s just who you became too. You kept that identity with every dream.”

“It wasn’t that many dreams boy.”

“Don’t call me boy. I hate that.”

“Yes, you were a mature 19 when you invented me.”

“Really?” I lay on my stomach and peered down at him.

“Really,” he said with a faggoty lisp and the pointed piece of yellow fabric flew upward. “I thought I was just some jack in the box until you named me.” The faggoty lisp continued.

“That’s kids stuff,” I rolled off the door and onto my back. “At 19 I could not relate to a jack-in-the-box.”

“Remember when you learned to slow the crank down?” He asked with a slight laugh, and then all of a sudden the door opened and his head popped out. “I use to scare the shit out of you.” He sounded like my father when he needed to emphasize a point.

My heart was pounding in my chest but I refused to look startled or scared. I just laid there on the roof of the log cabin and studied him with a matter-of-fact gaze.

“Still do!” He burst out laughing and retreated in the cabin.

“I could smash your head in if I wanted to.”

"Yes," he said very slowly. "But you are not the head bashing type. You would rather grab me by the throat and shake me until I told you who I really was."

"It's true," I nodded at the sky.

"But I couldn't tell you that." I could hear him fidgeting beneath me.

"Why not?" I sat up.

The door slowly opened but he didn't come out. "Because you are working through an emotional memory. Who and what and where I am are of no consequence. Something triggered you at 19, and again today." I could see the top of his headpiece but he remained in the box. "And here we are in dream time."

"That's it, no more significance then an emotional memory?"

"That's it," his head slowly ascended but his body remained in the cabin. "Or a biochemical blip." The head shrugged. "I mean I wasn't exactly a nightmare, which is usually what emotional memories produce. I was something else."

"You were a cognitive echo," I cracked my knuckles. "An emotional memory attached to a child's toy."

"Me, a cognitive echo?" He asked in a mocking, high voice with a fake cockney accent. "Is that an attempt to be poetic?" His voice dropped but the accent remained. "Or is that some technical cliché?" His voice dropped again and he lost the accent. "Seriously," his voice was flat. "What do you think is going on? Why did you bring me back?"

"There is a magical quality about you. The magic has an element of surprise that is shocking, but sometimes fun."

"Well of course I am fun," the head said with a bounce. The three spokes of the head piece bounced with it, and the yellow one above his lip curled a bit. "But I am predictable," his eyebrows went up and complimented his

tone. "Terribly predictable." His eyes were still very wide and then they shut suddenly. "It's the crank," he said with his eyes still closed. "And that silly little song."

"I forgot about that," I laughed.

"It wasn't funny then," his eyes opened. "Pop," he said with a pause. "Goes the weasel." The eyes closed again and then opened. "That first word got you."

"It did," I admitted. "Predictable, but still scary."

"Even more scary when you were playing alone."

"So let's talk prediction in dreams."

"Me? A smile emerged on his face and two red circles accented his dimples."

"You're no jack-in-the-box," I leaned back on my elbows.

"I am Julius Jingle." The eyebrows rose and raised shoulders ascended to his ears. A slender body gracefully emerged from the rooftop.

"Why did I label you King of the Elves?" My eyes scanned him from head to toe. "You're too big to be an elf."

"Just words," he shrugged. "Sometimes words just have a nice sound in dreamtime, and it's the consonant and or vowel combination that produce the meaning."

"Like onomatopoeia," I sat up.

"Sort of," he wrinkled his nose. "Sound and energy are related."

"Well sounds create a condition, at least within me."

“Hmm,” he rubbed his chin with his thumb and forefinger and then looked up at the branches of a tree that were a few feet above us. He blinked and in an instant he was sitting above me on one of the branches. “I don’t like it when you are close to me.”

“You hardly have any features,” I laughed. “You are like an animated doll.”

“It’s dream time boy,” he said softly and shook his head. “You create the detail based upon the residents in your subconscious.”

“Right,” I snapped sarcastically.

“So you want to talk about dreams, is that why you conjured me up?”

“Partly,” I hesitated. “There really is no you,” I pursed my lips. “In dream time there is only me. All the people are me. All the situations are me. All the characters are me. Even the inanimate objects are me.” I sat with my arms crossed. “I invent them all. I am the creator, the producer and the actor for every character.”

“Works great in therapy,” Julius whispered. “When you need to work through an issue.” Suddenly his head was in my face. “But what about all that speculation about being, and the experiences in meditation that prove to you that you are more than you?” The head asked in a loud voice and retreated to the branch above me. “Suppose it’s not a psychological issue that you are trying to work out? Suppose it is more of a goal or an aspiration, or even your destiny?”

“Well,” I hesitated. “A major component of dreaming is psychological, which includes some precognitive stuff, and yes there is a spiritual component in dreams as well.” I leaned back on my elbows again. “But what’s the point?”

“The point is that there are many reasons we dream. Take me for example. I am an emotional memory. Why do you think an emotional memory triggers a dream? What is the purpose? What might result?”

“Cute,” I leaned back on my hands. “You want the pop quiz response or is this a different genre? Maybe an executive summary would be best.”

“I remind you of some executives,” he placed a finger to his lips. “So let’s go with that.”

“Well I’ll talk about you as an example. The emotional memory that you come from is one of surprise, but not total surprise. As a kid you were a jack in the box. I knew you were coming but you were still a surprise. In my late teens you morphed to an Elf. You were something other worldly with a knowledge of who I would become. It’s like right before I was about to become you were there to announce it.”

“In your late teens you were becoming many things. So what’s the point?”

“Well it’s like a confrontation. I knew for example that I was gay. Your arrival in my dreams confirmed that aspect of my personality with a surprise that it was time to acknowledge it, and time to deal with it. It was like a pop from the pop goes the weasel.”

“There were three aspects of becoming the personality you knew you were to become. That’s one of them. Tell me the other two.”

“Well the spiritual part of who I am is another. I mean spiritual curiosity was all consuming for me and I knew I had to do something with it. I had to pursue a spiritual path, and when the doors started to open there was another pop.”

“And the third pop?”

“That was about career. It was about staying in school and going on to graduate school.”

“Nicely done.” Julius stood up on the branch and then let himself fall into the open door of the log cabin and the door flew shut.”

“What about precognition in dreams?”

“Well that was the intentional design, I mean for your ancestors anyway.”

“So are you telling me that I don’t foresee events in my future?”

“I didn’t say that boy.”

“You know you are triggering an emotional memory with that word?”

“It is what it was, you know that. To answer your question, you live in a very complex environment. There are all kinds of things that find their way to the dream landscape, but they are not real. Well,” he paused. “I should say they are just not relevant.”

“Like what I retain from movies and books and that sort of thing.”

“Exactly.”

“So precognition is a possibility.”

“Well of course it is. And it doesn’t have to be something foreign or totally unexpected.”

“Well we do create our own reality.”

“Mostly.” The door flew open and I could see the top of his head piece, but he did not come out. “The point is that most of the time we anticipate what is going to happen. Dream time lets us problem solve and play it out before it happens.”

“Wow,” my eyes grew wide. “So what you are implying here is that precognition is nothing more than a preview of what an individual visualizes, of the realities that one is in the process of creating.”

“Or what an individual draws to them energetically, or perhaps karmically.” The head raised a couple of inches and I could see his eyes. “Humans are not that intentional, nor do they have that much control.” The eyes darted back and forth and then focused on me. “Unless they are highly evolved,”

the eyes darted back and forth again. “And in that case group karma takes on greater significance.”

“So if there is a warning kind of dream,” I rubbed my nose with my forefinger. “It’s probably more karmic then the result of an individual visualizing the future.”

“Or it’s a potential path based upon the people and environment around the individual.”

“These types of dreams are like a sandbox. They let you plan and experiment how you will deal with what is to happen next.”

“And sometimes it’s bogus.” His eyes moved from side to side again and then did a circular dance around me. “And you,” his eyes focused on mine with an intense stare. “Sometimes you place too much energy on fiction.”

I gave him a blank stare and with it came a memory of empathizing with a character in a movie, to the point where I could feel myself projecting energy.

“It stresses you.”

My mouth was open and I was still in the blank stare. “In defense of fiction,” I shook my head to come out of the stare. “It’s another type of sandbox.”

“Perhaps.” A quiet voice came from below me and was followed by a yawn. “Just a warning.” The head rose higher and the position of the headpiece changed. Both eyes were covered by spokes of fabric. His nose was small and pointed, and his lips were thin and grayish. “What else?”

“So there are dreams triggered by emotional memories,” I cocked my head to study him. “And there are dreams triggered by anticipation that may be pre cognitive.” I titled my head the other way. “Some are nonsense, some are opportunity, and in dream time it is difficult to distinguish.” I straightened my head and my back, then let my arms slide back further as I continued to rest on my hands. “And some dreams are just a random playback of the day illogically sequenced by emotional reactions.”

“Don’t you hate that?” The head twirled a full three hundred and sixty degrees.

“I do,” I made a funny face. “I always feel like I’ve been cheated of my rest when that happens.”

“So what do you do?”

“Sometimes I wake up. Sometimes I get up. Sometimes I move into a focused meditation, and then from there fall into sleep again.”

“Very nice,” he said melodically in sing song.

“Sometimes it works better then others.” I rolled to one side and rested my head on my hand. “What about psychic dreams?”

“You mean dreams of integration and initiation.” He arose from the opening and hung over me. His feet overlapped one another, as did his hands. “As above so below.”

“Yeah,” I tried to look into his eyes but the swaying spokes of fabric were in the way. “So where are you going with that?”

“Think process for a moment. One process can be used for multiple ends, correct?”

“I suppose.”

“Remember Carl Jung’s concept of individuation?”

“Ummm,” I hesitated. “Sort of.”

“Well it’s about differentiating and integrating elements of self. It’s the process of personality development, and it happens during dream time.”

“I know where you are going,” I said with a smile. “Personality has a spiritual component too.”

“That’s right,” he said ascending to the branch above us. “Elements of character from the people around us and our physical environment contribute to the development of our personality. Our spiritual initiatives and intentions also contribute to the development of our personality.”

“Sometimes our spiritual goals and aspirations are actualized in the dream realm. Individuation from a soul personality perspective is integrating and expanding beyond self. It’s about greater cosmic awareness.” I bit my upper lip. “Both aspects of personality development happen in dream time.”

I was silent for a moment and then sat up straight. I felt as though I were coming out of myself, and then I realized that I truly was. A ghost of me ascended to the branch above as Julius descended into the open doorway below. The sound of the door slamming shut startled me, and when I looked down I realized I was sitting on a jack-in-the-box. Pop goes the weasel was playing all around me. The ghost jumped back in my body and I quickly stood up and stepped on the door.

“What’s the pop boy?” Julius yelled from inside the log cabin.

“Where’s the crank Julius? I’m not ready for the pop, not yet.”

“But you know what’s coming boy.”

“You know I don’t know that I do.”

“Then the crank is broken.”

“And that means you can’t come out.” I jumped down from the roof and headed back to the road. It was getting dark and as I was cutting through a yard to get to the dead end circle and the streetlights came on. I could see two shadowy figures in the distance. It looked as though one figure was attacking the other.

“Another dream when I was 19,” I muttered to myself and sat on the curb to watch. One man was trying to shake off the other, who had a knife pointed at his neck.

“What do you want?”

“To keep you afraid?” Said the man on top. He was outrageously thin and his cape dragged the street as he slipped down from the other man’s back. “How about a snake?” The man pulled a wand from his cape and there was a puff of smoke and then a snake appeared.

“No, no,” the other man raised his arm over his eyes. He was a thin adolescent and his face was speckled with perspiration and acne. The snake slithered toward him and rapped around his leg, then slowly slithered up his body toward his face. The young man lowered his arm to look and screamed in terror. As he screamed the other man laughed. The scream became louder and then the laugh became louder as well.

I stood up from the curb and wiped the dirt from my behind as I approached the adolescent. “Why do you choose to live in fear?”

Tears ran down the young man’s face as he looked at me. The snake turned in my direction and hissed. “I don’t think so,” I nodded at the snake and then looked at the man in the cape.

“You should be very afraid.” He pointed a finger and at the same time his other hand was rising in the air with the wand. I walked toward him and pulled the wand from his hand, then used it to poke at the snake. The snake fell and I kicked it toward the sewer. “Let’s chat.” I broke the wand and looked at the man in the cape and then at the younger man with acne.

“You can chat for all of us,” the man in the cape motioned toward the snake and the adolescent. “We are your creation.”

I sat on the curb and studied the trio, then nodded at the snake and he slithered over. “You come from a Catholic place that still resides in my consciousness. It is about guilt and punishment.”

“And me?” The young man stepped forward. What is my drama?”

“Your drama is the journey of the faggot, the journey of self esteem. It is about worthiness; and worthiness that is both real and imagined.”

The man in the cape snickered and then shrugged. “I’m just the facilitator” He sat with his hands clasped together, and then separated them and extended his hands with his palms up.

“No,” I said smiling at him. “You are the magician. You give them what they want.”

“Forget them,” he waved his hands and they disappeared. “What do you want?”

“I have read about numerous spiritual truths and natural laws. I have been the initiate, yet sometimes feel I have not been initiated.”

“It’s all about building to the pop.”

“What do you mean?”

“Julius tells me.” He coughed and turned around, then when he turned back around to face me he was Julius. “There are some things you have learned but not fully experienced because you choose to continue the same behavior and the same frame of reference. In essence you are not afraid of the pop, you are afraid of living the truth that the pop will bring.”

“I get anxious,” I admitted and shook my head. “But can we be specific here?”

“There are two aspects to the pop that are about to happen, and yes they are sequential. One you can think of as event driven. It’s about opening your heart in dream time to be initiated, which will mean new knowledge and new awareness.”

I said nothing and looked down.

“Be open to these experiences rather than trying to control them.”

I looked back up but still said nothing.

“The other aspect is the ongoing integration of personality, which includes your experiences on the earth plane as well as in dream time.”

“So that’s why all these dreams have been coming back at me. I’m in the process of pulling it all together. Every night there is a collage of people and experiences from my past, and a recollection of psychic moments and transitional dreams.”

“Tell me about the alien dream.”

“There were two aliens from another world who recruited me to help with some kind of transition. Before I could really help them I had to understand their situation and their end objective. The only way I could do that was through personal experience. I immersed myself in their ideology without judgment.”

“And what was the ideology?”

“There were three worlds that co-existed. Their co-existence was an expression of possibility. In the first world I was who I am; the same life and the same people and circumstances. In the second life I followed some alternate paths, but in essence the life consisted of the same lessons and overall experience. As I was reviewing these two lives and their possibilities, I was being taught about reincarnation from a very practical perspective. The two aliens experienced many lives that they were willing to share, and because there were no boundaries of space, time or being I was permitted to experience them also. The only way I can describe it is with an analogy of digestion. It was that matter of fact.”

“So what was the third world?”

“That’s where I really got hung up. My expression in the third world was very different. I had an older brother. My relationships were different. My career was different. My approach toward the spiritual path was different.”

“What happened?”

“I got hung up on the details in the third world and could not continue with my objective.”

“And what was the objective?”

“To help them with a huge integration process. This was happening at the same time as my personal experience in the three worlds, and my experience in sharing the lives of the aliens.”

“What were you doing?”

“I was working with people in groups. I can’t explain exactly what I was doing, but I know that I was helping in some way.”

Suddenly we were in the woods again and I was sitting on top of the cabin in a yoga position, rocking back and forth.

“What does the dream mean to you?” A small voice came from below.

“Well like I was saying before there is a feeling of incompleteness. I feel as though I have acquired a lot of knowledge in this lifetime, but in some instances the knowledge is pure cognition and not experiential.”

“Make a list.”

“What?”

“Make a list.” A slower, quieter version of Pop Goes the Weasel was playing all around us. “You have very specific questions, and very specific experiential intentions. Write them down.”

“And?”

“One by one, bring them into your meditation.”

“And?”

“And, and,” the door flew open with a pop and Julius’s head rocked to and fro. “Wait for the pop!”



an act of contrition  
slipped from his lips  
and the religious believer  
lusted for penance  
as he imagined his favorite saint

**give me the list**

*he stands in the parking lot of antiques  
and stares at the confessional  
parked on the cold black pavement*

*he imagines himself kneeling on one knee*

***the first question is about worthiness;  
help me understand***

stand by. next question?

*he enters the confessional,  
pulls the purple curtain.  
and looks up to find that the church is the sky*

**sound**

**my next question is finding my sound**

focus on the pain  
that comes  
to your ears  
when you are feeling  
psychically  
inclined.

associate. integrate. let sound become

*his tongue hangs  
in an emotional memory of holy communion;  
he deletes the confessional*

***between***

***and the last question is death.  
what is the relationship***

***the spiritual,  
the astral,  
and the energy of love?***

stand by, stand by, stand by

## IN NEED OF A TEST

There are people from the other side all around me, but I can't see them. I am running through a large open field with rolling green hills. A stiff red hose about four inches thick is wrapped around my stomach, and extends upward toward my mouth. As I run I yell 'I love you' into the hose, believing that it acts as some kind of microphone to communicate with the deceased. I stop running and catch my breath, feeling guilty about trying to communicate. I loosen the hose and rise up into the sky and float over the hills. The hose falls to the ground as I approach the campus, and I descend in front of Ignatius Hall. My written exam has been completed and reviewed, and now I am scheduled for the oral portion of the exam. I make my way to the second floor and the smell of the hallway creates a nervous energy within me. I tell myself that this is a dream, a memory of long ago, and that I was very successful on both the written and oral portions of the exam. I admit to myself that if I put the nervousness aside, the oral exam was sort of fun. It forced me to consider and connect certain points that I never would have connected if I hadn't been probed with questions. It was a great learning experience, and a powerful emotional memory took root within me.

"Coffee?" Father Hanlon shook my hand and touched my shoulder with his other hand as he leaned forward. He was tall with dancing green eyes. He had an apartment in town, and was the only priest in the school who didn't live in the rectory full time. In addition to being a professor he worked as a counselor for the homeless. He wasn't like any priest I'd ever met before, or since for that matter. In addition to being brilliant and very well educated he was very down to earth and often funny. He was a complete contrast to the priests I knew as a little boy in Catholic school. I took many classes with Father Hanlon, and toward the end of the program he was my advisor and counselor. I valued his perspective and opinion. When I think back on it he never gave me advice. What he did was to get to know me, and encourage me to follow my heart.

"I'd prefer water if that's ok."

"Of course," he signaled to an assistant and she took a mug from a small table in front of us and went down the hall. To our right was a small conference room and I could see two people sitting inside.

"Come in, come in," he nodded.

"Good morning," I said to the two women as I entered the room. One of them I knew well. The other I had a sense that I knew but I could not place her.

Both women stood up and I approached them. "I've read your papers," Sister Claire said with a smile. "And everything's in order. Are you ready? Do you need anything before we begin?"

We all shook hands. "I'm all set." A young woman came in with my cup of water and handed it to me.

Sister Claire was feisty and challenging, but in a calm and powerful way. She is the most even tempered and humble person I ever met. I can't remember if she had three PhD's, or two PhD's and a law degree. She made it very clear, however, that she was first and foremost a nun. She was not like any nun I had ever met. She challenged everything, and did it in such a peaceful way that you could see in the expression on people's faces that they were opening their minds to possibility. I remember one day before class, she and a few women were talking about a movie that Paul Newman was in, and she made a comment about how hot he was. The young women's eyes grew wide, and a look of shock spread like wildfire as the room became a hush of whispers. She started the class by talking about the vow of chastity and how important this was to her, and then declared. "I am human. Why do you choose to ignore my humanity? It is healthy to talk about all aspects of who we are, even though we may choose not to act out on some of our desires."

"I'm sorry," my gaze moved from Sister Claire to the other woman. "I don't recall meeting you." I placed the cup on the table and scratched the side of my head.

"Mrs. Frederick's," she blinked and smiled.

My mouth hung open as I continued to stare. Although I didn't recall her face, her voice brought it all into focus. She was one of my seventh grade teachers, and I was in her class twice every day. The morning class was

Social Studies and the afternoon class was English. It didn't make sense that she was here.

"All sense is nonsense in one sense," Sister Claire made a little laugh and then delicately placed two fingers to her lips."

"Let's start with the question that is foremost in your memory," Father Hanlon cocked his head in my direction. "What is the significance of the color white in Edgar Allen Poe's work?"

Sister Claire said nothing but raised her palm a couple of inches above the table top, then nodded to each of us in silence.

"Dead," Mrs. Fredricks said with a flat tone. Do you know what dead means?"

"We are not dead, or least I am not," I smiled at each of them. "This is a dream."

"Well of course," Mrs. Fredericks snapped and then looked at me with a compassionate stare. It was odd how she hooked me as a kid. She sensed my insecurity, my lack of self esteem, and then played it back in a way that made me want to fight. She didn't encourage me right away when I fought back with an answer to a question, or when I challenged her with another question. She would bait me teasingly and then slowly the praise would come. I always did her homework first. Although her assignments weren't always fun, her smile and encouragement kept me going.

"And," she looked in my direction and her smile absorbed me. "The answer is?"

"Well," I wrinkled my brow. "The soul never dies. It lives forever."

Sister Claire put on her wire rim glasses and sifted through the pile of paper in front of her. "Here you talk about three aspects of being. You describe one as the physical body, another as spirit or soul, and the third as astral or psychic." She took off the glasses and smiled at me. "What happens to the psychic part of who we are?"

"The psychic body dies also, but not at the same time."

"In your dream journals you make reference to astral trash." Father Hanlon's arm was extended from the elbow and he leaned forward on a closed fist. "Does the psychic body become trash in your opinion?"

"Well the psychic body is discarded at death because it is no longer needed." I smiled at him. "In that sense, yes it is trash. The psychic body takes time to disintegrate."

"You also make a poetic reference to an astral ghetto, a frightening place that you never care to visit again. Explain how this concept of trash and a ghetto expanded your understanding of the astral." His open hand made a circling motion in the air.

"Well first it confirmed the idea of levels and I visualized their existence in convolutions or rings. I imagined astral body parts falling in space and settling in the lowest ring. Secondly, it took away some of the fear. It's like being startled by someone in a mask, and suddenly you are aware that they are wearing a mask and there is no reason for alarm."

"Some of the fear," he pointed a finger in the air. "Why some?"

"Entities can be attracted to and reside in this realm," I looked up at the ceiling and then at Father Hanlon. "That's how the ghetto image manifested for me."

"How do you know this to be true?" Sister Claire cocked her head.

"Books, dreams, meditations."

"Anything else?" She held her lips tightly together.

"If one is under the influence of drugs, alcohol or medication, they may psychically be drawn here."

"As you have," Mrs. Fredericks picked repeatedly at her chin and rose her eyebrows. "So you do have personal experience."

“Don’t deny yourself personal knowledge,” Father Hanlon shook his head and studied me, then made a notation on the top piece of paper in front of him. “Even if the knowledge came about from behavior that you may not value, or may even be ashamed of.”

Sister Claire leaned back in her chair and tilted her head slightly. “Back to the three aspects,” she tapped at the paper on top of her pile. It was the first page in cluster one of this book. “Explain the relationship to consciousness.”

“Well,” my eyebrows rose and I looked at her with a squint. “Consciousness comes with the first breath and leaves when the soul departs the body.” I said in a quiet voice. “I don’t know if that is the answer you are looking for.”

“That’s a very very broad question,” Father Hanlon waved both hands in the air as though he were erasing the question.

“It is a bit broad,” Sister Claire squinted and then smiled. “So let’s tighten it a bit.” The thumb and forefinger of each hand came together, then the two fingers of one hand touched the two fingers of the other and pulled away slowly as though she were pulling a string. “Explain how consciousness relates to the psychic or astral body.”

“Oh, oh, ok,” I wore a confident expression. “Consciousness goes with the soul.

Even though the astral body remains for some time it has no consciousness.”

“Unless someone animates it,” Father Hanlon gave me his joking face. “You talk about that in your trash and ghetto theme.” His face flushed. “Do you really believe that? Why would someone want to do that?”

“To spook you,” I laughed. “Or to make money.”

“Oh yes,” Sister Claire nodded. “Make no mistake, there is a psychic mafia.”

Father Hanlon laughed and then took on a serious expression. “So your knowledge here is mostly from books,” he shrugged. “Some dreams influenced by books.” He tilted his head. “Perhaps some initiate dreams.” His hand touched the side of his face and slowly he let the fingers climb to the other side. “What else?”

I shrugged with an empty expression.

Mrs. Fredericks picked at her chin and pursed her lips. “Anything around the death of a loved one?” Her tone was compassionate but also had a challenging edge. “In terms of first hand experience concerning the astral or psychic body.”

“I’ve never been really successful with intentional out of body projection,” I looked at the table. “I mean there were times when I projected myself home during business trips. I remember once projecting myself to convocation when I was sick in bed,” I raised my finger in the air. “And I received confirmation from others at the convocation that my presence was felt.” My hand came down and my face fell. “But you know, over the years there just was no need.” I said flatly and shook my head. “No purpose.”

Sister Claire shuffled the papers in front of her and then looked me in the eye. “Let’s start with second hand knowledge. Information you picked up from others, like say your mother and father.”

I sat silent for a moment.

“How did your conscious awareness of the psychic body change when your father died?” Father Hanlon tapped quietly at the table with an index finger.

“My mother enjoyed the sensational aspect of psychic phenomenon. She was drawn to side show psychics for readings and that sort of thing, but there was also a very personal side to it all that she didn’t talk about. My father encouraged the silence, as it was all a bunch of mumbo jumbo to him. He also saw it as a threat to her mental health, and she believed him. After he died she talked about his presence around her in a joking sort of

way, saying things like she always knew she was nuts. We sat down one afternoon and had a serious discussion. I told her about what I learned concerning the psychic body. She shared her experiences with me. We openly talked about different ways to interrupt those experiences. The main focus was on whether or not it was really my father she was seeing and hearing, and the implications of what was going on.”

“How did those conversations alter your perspective?”

“I believed my mother,” I shrugged matter of factly. “There were times in the middle of the night when she could hear him walking down the hall. She could feel him getting back into bed.” I paused and my eyes danced from face to face. “And she had a tremendous sense that he was protecting her. We were sitting at the kitchen table one afternoon and I felt that too. She described it as noise and then talked about my father’s army buddies whom she never met. They were around her, protecting the house.”

“And you believed her.”

“At that moment I experienced it with her, but let me talk for a minute about belief. My mother definitely had some psychic stuff going on, but she was also in grief. What was happening to my mother was not what it seemed on the surface. She was calling to my father, and that had a consequence. She was in grief and there were psychic and psychological consequences to the emotions she experienced.”

“How did this alter your perspective?” Mrs. Fredricks tilted her head and squinted with one eye. “About consciousness.”

“My father as a conscious entity was not there for most of it, except when she called to him. He is dead. His consciousness went elsewhere. His psychic body remained in the presence of his home environment, and the conscious intentions he had when he was alive, like protecting my mother, still remained energetically. It was further enhanced by him, his consciousness, on whatever plane it existed. His presence was very powerful for several months, and gradually faded away.”

“And you experienced this first hand.”

“I did.”

“Tell me about another personal experience, and how your perspective was confirmed or enhanced.”

“I don’t know about enhanced,” I scratched my head. “But when Gerry died I experienced something similar. I felt his presence everyday for a couple of months, especially at night and in the morning. I could hear him walking up the steps and down the hall. I could hear him in the bathroom. I could hear his shuffling footsteps in the bedroom.” I cocked my head. “I suppose one could claim this was all psychological, but I know it was not. The sounds sometimes woke me up.” I cocked my head the other way. “The psychological was about the peace that came over me from these experiences. Similar to my mother, there was a feeling of love and protection.”

“And what was different?” Father Hanlon looked down and then away.

“Unlike my mother, I did not call to him. I did not reciprocate, initiate or even participate in any psychic experience. I just let it happen. I knew his consciousness was somewhere else, and that my calling to it would impede the process of integration and moving on.”

Father Hanlon continued to look down. “I know you don’t like to talk about it,” his voice was soft and compassionate and his head slowly rose. “Let’s return for a moment to your speculations about what you label astral trash and the ghetto.”

“Well it’s about deceit, or I should say deception.” I looked down and then to the side of Father Hanlon. “I have strong feelings here, and many of them live in anger.” I looked him in the eye.

“Can you separate the emotion from the knowledge?”

“There is a link between the astral or psychic realm and mental illness, particularly if you are in grief or there has been trauma in your life, or if there are drugs or another method of altering consciousness.”

“Where are you in memory?”

“I am dancing in space from hospital to hospital, sitting beside Gerry when he was pumped up on morphine and listening to his stories about the people who were after him. His stories were dreamlike but much more than fantasy. I remember him in the emergency room the night he left home forever. He was so afraid, so terrified.” I looked at Mrs. Fredericks. “I don’t know enough to even really speculate here, except to say that there is a connection.”

“You experienced some of it too, didn’t you?” Her face took on a sadness. “I know it is hard, but there is truth here for you. Can we take this opportunity to explore and discover?”

I nodded yes and memory took me to when I left work and started a new graduate program. I came home from class and Gerry was in bed waiting for me, his hands holding his head in pain. He waited for me to come home before taking medication. And after taking it the delusions came, along with brief periods of sleep. It was a struggle for him not to give into the delusions, not to believe it. We talked. We focused on light. I tried to join him in consciousness, to go there with him and be the rational voice, and for a time I experienced what he experienced.

“How were you able to help? What worked?”

More memories stumbled in of me and my mother in nursing homes, hospitals and doctors offices. Suddenly I remembered my mother crawling on the floor in the guest bedroom. She was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and depression and a host of other problems. No one managed her medication, at least not successfully. I had her taken off all of it, despite what doctors had to say. That night the delusions began to dissolve, and so did some psychological issues that she was holding about me being gay. It all came out that night. In the end she didn’t know who I was. Sometimes I was her brother and Gerry was her brother’s friend. At other times Gerry was her brother. Gerry was her rational voice more often than I when the demons came.

“I did several things that worked.” My eyes scanned the three faces in the room. “First I acknowledged the psychic pain. I gave each of them permission to talk about it.” I rocked back and forth in my chair. “Talk inspired them to be rational, to not give in. Often I talked about love. I suggested that they think love when the negative images, sounds and dramas came.” I sat still for a moment. “And I think it helped.” I started rocking again. “Except when the pain was too great, or in my mother’s case when the depression was profound.”

“Did you do anything else?” Sister Claire asked with her head down as she took notes.

“I projected myself to where they were, mentally. I thought about light and love as I did this, in an effort to protect and bring peace.” I shrugged. “It did some good.” I said with a smile.

“And what about you?” Father Hanlon’s hands were together as though in prayer. He shook the two hands up and down. “That’s like opening yourself to rape.” He looked at me and then at the two women. “Can I be vulgar for a moment?” He asked in a harsh whisper.

The two women nodded their heads and I shrugged.

He squinted and his face flushed red. “That’s like having an expectation of sex based upon memories of being fucked unwillingly as a kid.” His hands were clasped together with the forefingers extended in my direction.

“Oo,” my eyes jutted to the two women and each of them covered their mouths.

“So I have some expectations that are really out of whack.”

“It’s ok,” Mrs. Fredericks removed her hand and nodded. “Your heart is open to light, and your efforts were intended to spread light. Your psychic projections were to a lower realm. You said earlier that you had no need of psychic projection, well, you may want to reconsider that.” She shook her head. “What you did to comfort your mother and your partner was most



definitely projection.” She looked at me and her eyes grew wide. “And I must say,” she tilted her head slightly. “Quite courageous.”

“But it’s left you like an abused child from an expectation perspective.” Father Hanlon said without blinking. “Well,” he said in a daze and then shook his head. “You’ve worked your way through it,” he nodded in an attempt to diminish the emotion he was displaying. “And continue to.”

“Umm,” I nodded. “Can we take a little break?”

\* \* \*

I was in the sky again, flying around the campus with the red hose that wrapped around my waist and extended to my mouth. I flew high above the campus and when I zoomed back down I saw the house I grew up in, then the schools I attended. I spoke into the red hose in an attempt to communicate with the people who were there with me. I sensed they were around, but I could not see them. I sensed they could hear me and I struggled to listen, but there was no communication. In frustration I zoomed up and then down again. There was my office, then another office, then the house in Maine, then the house in New York. Again I spoke into the red hose and the campus came into view. Father Hanlon was standing outside the rectory with one of my friends who was standing over his motorcycle. My friend was handing him a paper that I had done. Father Hanlon refused the paper and whispered something to him. My friend got off the bike and gave him his helmet. Suddenly father Hanlon was racing toward me on the bike.

“Get on,” he looked at me and the bike stopped in mid air.

“What are you doing?” I gave him a puzzled look. “Priests don’t ride motorcycles in the sky.”

“This one does,” he accelerated laughing and then shut the engine. “Get on.”

I got on the motorcycle and we quietly drifted above the campus.

“This is nuts,” I shook my head looking down.

“For you, nuts means you can’t relate and don’t understand. Talk to me.”

“How do you think and reason when your frame of reference is totally blown away?” I leaned back on the bike. “I mean this whole time space thing,” I shook my head. “Those are my frames of reference; they are my realities, and my way of understanding.”

“The astral isn’t a place.”

“Duh,” I said mockingly. “I understand that from an intellectual perspective, but that does nothing for understanding when I am out here like this, or when I am back home trying to make sense of it all.”

“Try an allegorical approach,” Father Hanlon started the bike. “We are in the astral, right?”

“We certainly are,” I said sarcastically and clutched onto each side of the seat as he thrust forward.

“And there is an earth plane, right?”

“Hmm,” I nodded.

“And there is third plane, or I should say group of planes. Some call them astral or cosmic, and some use other words.” He revved the engine. “Don’t worry, it’s all aligned with the three core planes of existence concept that you presented.”

“Go ahead.”

“I want you to reflect on two questions. First, what do you imagine to be the intention of each plane? Second, who resides there?”

He shut the engine and floated in silence. I could see my friend stuffing my paper into a mailbox on the porch of the rectory, then saw him walking



back to where the three of us met. Everything below was so green and alive, as though it had just rained. We dropped a few feet and then sailed to the exact spot where we met.

“Thanks,” Father Hanlon took off the helmet and handed it to my friend. He then looked in my direction and nodded. “I will see you in fifteen minutes.” He pointed his finger at me and jabbed it back and forth a few times, then walked toward the mailbox to retrieve the paper.

\* \* \*

“You know I think I will have tea,” I nodded politely to Sister Claire as the three of us entered the meeting room.

“We opened our previous session with a question that I proposed about death.”

Mrs. Fredericks said as we took our seats. “And that lead us into a discussion about the three planes of existence. The major focus of our discussion concerned the astral or psychic plane, with particular attention to the concept of consciousness.”

A young woman walked in with a tray of coffee and tea. She quietly placed the tray on the table, then handed each of us a cup. She placed a small sugar bowl in front of Father Hanlon, and next to it an open container of milk. She smiled and picked up the tray, then stepped back and left the meeting room.

“Are you sure,” Mrs. Fredericks tilted her head to one side and paused to study me. “Of your conclusions about consciousness?”

“I said that when the soul leaves the body, consciousness goes with it.” I looked her in the eye. “And yes, that is still my perspective.”

“How do you explain your father haunting your mother, so to speak, if the psychic entity had no consciousness?”

Sister Claire raised a finger in the air. “If I remember correctly you said that your father was not there, consciously.” She sipped her tea. “What was it you said?” She put on her glasses and looked through the pile of papers. “Hmm,” she held the cup in the air as she studied something in the pile. “You said, and I quote. ‘My father as a conscious entity was not there for most of it, except when she called to him. He is dead. His consciousness went elsewhere.’ End of quote.” She sipped the tea and looked at me. “What did you mean by that?”

I sat in silence and sipped the tea. “You are right. This is wonderful.”

“Do you like it really? It’s licorice spice.”

“Very pungent,” I took another sip. “Really good.”

“Glad you like the tea,” Mrs. Fredericks gave me a look as though she thought I was stalling. “I’ll try it next time,” she looked me in the eye as though giving me permission to stall and think.

“Well I think there was an energy that my father created while he was still alive. It was energy of protection.”

“Yes but how can energy sustain itself, and initiate new energy such as your father’s army buddies? How can that happen without conscious intention?” Sister Claire looked me in the eye. “Unless there is a delusion, a psychological consequence.”

“No,” I put up my hand in defense. “I experienced it too.”

“Experiencing the psychological realm of another is within the realm of possibility.” Mrs. Fredericks crossed her arms and studied me. “It doesn’t answer the question.”

“Well,” I said with a deep exhale and sat back. “I think it comes down to intention,” my eyes floated in the direction of Father Hanlon. “What is the intention of the astral or psychic plane? Who resides there?”

Father Hanlon gave me a wink. “And?” He tilted his head. “What is the intention?”

“The astral is not a place,” I looked down at the table. “But I need the concepts of time and space, although they are illusions, to make sense of it.” I looked up. “I perceive the astral to be a place, for lack of a better word or concept, that overlaps the material plane, and in fact dips beneath it. There are entities on earth that far surpass the entities on the lower planes of the astral from an evolutionary perspective.”

“So who resides there?” Sister Claire clasped her hands and leaned on them with her chin.

“Here is where we come to intention.” I said with a smile. “The astral was not intended as a residence. It was intended an intermediary place. It is a place where those on the earth experience the spiritual aspects of who they are, and where those of the spirit connect and experience with what was left behind on earth.”

“Talk to me about your mother and father.” Mrs. Fredericks stroked her chin.

“Well my mother missed my father.” I looked at her matter of factly. “When she experienced his astral presence she assumed his consciousness was there too. She called out to him, and his consciousness descended from another plane.”

“I see,” Mrs. Fredericks nodded. “And what of the mental illness perspective you mentioned, how does that fit in?”

“Well,” my eyebrows rose. “Sometimes it was not he who responded.”

The three exchanged glances and nods and wrote things down, then Sister Claire looked up and smiled at me. “We are going to move on to Gerry, but before we do we are going to talk about one of your teachers. He is William Walker Atkinson.”

“From this aspect of learning he was Yogi Ramacharaka,” I said without thinking.

“What did you learn from him about the third realm of existence?” Sister Claire cocked her head and then clarified. “By that I mean the spiritual realm as differentiated from the astral.”

“The move to the next realm of existence is not instant. There is a coma period similar to that of birth on the earth plane.” My eyes scanned the three faces in the room. “I haven’t synthesized the essence of this or what is going on so I am not even going to try, but I will say there is an experience similar to dreaming.” I scratched my head. “The astral is like a portal.”

“This coma period,” Father Hanlon paused and rubbed his lips with his forefinger. What do you know about it?”

“Nothing first hand,” I arched my fingers and then cracked my knuckles. “I mean I am sure there is experience between lives, but those are not memories I can recall.”

“Fair,” Sister Claire looked at me and then at Father Hanlon. “What do you imagine it to be?”

“Well,” I put a hand to my face with a smirk in an attempt to be humorous. “From your persuasion it’s called purgatory.”

“Cute,” Mrs. Fredericks gave a little laugh and looked at the two clerics. “I am not Catholic,” she announced and sat up straight.

“And how do people of your persuasion view it?” Sister Claire asked in a mocking tone and then broke out in a smile.

“My imagination here is jaded.” I looked at the floor. “But in a nutshell I think it’s about reviewing your life.” I looked up. “And I don’t think the perspective is stagnant, meaning that it is all about self. I think we reflect upon how we played others in the drama of our lives, and how others played us.”

“Interesting.” Sister Claire looked at Father Hanlon and then at me. “So during this coma there are dreams as well as intentional visits to the astral.”

“I believe that is true.”

“Intentional visits,” Father Hanlon played with his lip. “What about the subconscious?”

“I would guess that during the coma period the review includes the subconscious.”

“Back to your mental illness theory for a moment.” Mrs. Fredericks relaxed in the chair and put on her compassionate stare. “What is the relationship between delusion and the psychic realm?”

“Delusion is a false belief. First let me say that the psychic realm is by no means the only initiator of delusion.” I slumped down to her level in the chair and found her eyes. “When my mother was medicated, and Gerry too, they lost their mental focus. Something in the chemistry in the brain,” I paused hesitantly. “I do not understand it, but something chemical caused the brain to create nightmares. In some way I don’t understand, the medication surfaced a cluster of negative emotional memories and released them from subconscious to conscious memory.” I scratched my head. “Unlike people who wake up from a nightmare, they remained in this twilight because of the continued medication. In that twilight, in that dazed state, they opened themselves to entities in the lower realm of the astral.”

“That is similar to the idea of possession. Do you really believe this?”

“I try not to believe in anything but truth. What I shared with you is a speculation based upon my experience. The speculation is a possibility, something to be explored.” I looked at the floor and then at Mrs. Fredericks. “Belief is a frightening thing, as whatever we believe will become our truth.”

“Back to your mother,” Father Hanlon said as he outlined something on a piece of paper. “It sounds like there are three possibilities to explain her experiences with your father. The first is psychological, meaning that she

was coming from a place of grief, and the experience was imagined. The second stems from your mother’s psychological state and transcends to the psychic by her calling out to your father, and the consequence is your father communicating with your mother. The other possibility here is that someone on the astral pretends to be your father.” Father Hanlon checked two items on the paper. “Are you with me so far?”

I nodded in silence.

“The third possibility is your father calling out to your mother while he is in a dream in the coma state you talked about.” He made a third checkmark. “Am I right in summarizing what I heard you say?”

I continued to sit in silence and wrinkled my brow.

“Which of these do you think is truth?” Mrs. Fredericks said as though this were a true and false test.

“I would mark them all true,” I tilted my head to one side and gave her a smile. All three of them wrote something down. “But you missed a piece,” I shook my head. “The most important piece. Remember, this conversation started with a discussion about the psychic body and what happens to consciousness at death. The forth possibility, which is also a truth, is that my father’s psychic body was still on the earth plane and in my mother’s environment. Although his psychic body was there, his consciousness was not.”

“Got it,” Father Hanlon announced as he took notes on what I said.

“Let’s return to this concept of a coma,” Sister Claire scribbled with the pen and it ran out of ink. “What happens after this coma period?” She reached for another pen on the table.

“According to Ramacharaka,” I said as my right leg began to bounce involuntarily. “AKA, Atkinson,” I smiled. “The entity moves into an appropriate spiritual realm.”

“And is he your only source of knowledge in this area?”

"H. Spencer Lewis, the Rosicrucian's, they allude to this as well."

"Anyone else?"

"Well," I shrugged. "Just the pop psychics of the day. Each of them over the years had their own spin, and I'm sure it had an influence on my understanding." I scratched my head. "Plotinus had a heavy influence here too."

"Any personal experience you want to talk about? Dreams, perhaps?"

"None," I shook my head and looked down. "Well," I looked up and squinted at Father Hanlon. "The only related experience I have is one of communion, being with a group of people of like mind somewhere on the astral. I imagine the life after the coma state to be communal in some way, but I can only guess."

"Fair enough," Father Hanlon said with a nod.

"Is love an emotion?"

"My first reaction is no, but words can really trip you up. If love is an emotion, then it is the highest emotion a human experiences. By highest, I mean most in harmony with the divine."

"So we don't get tripped up in discussion, how do you define emotion?"

"Emotion produces a psychic and physical response."

Father Hanlon's lips protruded like a monkey. "Explain that."

"Emotions can be seen on the face, and have a physical consequence on the body. I can see anger, fear, sadness, jealousy, etc on your face. I can predict the physiological consequence of holding onto each of those emotions. I cannot see love on your face, and I cannot identify a physiological consequence."

"How did Edward Carpenter view love?"

"Love is the essence that propels life," I said scratching my head in search of better words. "I am struggling with how to explain it."

"In your own words."

"Like attracts unlike, that is a natural law. Carpenter sees energy as particles of spirit, and views love as the initiator of attraction."

"And what about this attraction beyond the material realm?"

"I don't know," I looked at Mrs. Fredericks and then at Sister Claire.

"Earlier when you were comparing your astral experiences with your mother, you said the difference was that you did not call out to Gerry because it impedes progress in the coma state."

"That's correct," I nodded. "But I did send thoughts of love."

"On a sub conscious level what do you think is going on?"

I closed my eyes and let emotion rule. "I want a response. I want to know that everything is ok." I was silent for a moment. "There is grief stuff too, but not so much anymore." I was silent again. "And there is also tremendous curiosity, wonder. What's it like? Where are you now?"

"Dead," Mrs. Fredericks face was flat. "What does dead mean?"

"That entity, that personality as I knew him is gone forever. So is my mother."

"And what happened or is happening to these soul personalities?"

"They are transitioning, integrating and becoming."

"And?"

I looked up with a smirk. "Some of me, some of my personality is part of that integration. And," I paused. "Each of them is already part of me."

"One last thing," Father Hanlon said in a soft voice. "I used a vulgar analogy earlier, and although I am sorry if it was offensive I do think it make a point. Did it make a point for you? Can you comment on that?"

"It was very clear. I have had some very intentional psychic experiences in the past ten years, and many have been in that lower astral realm. It has shaded my expectation and turned up the volume on fear. I need to balance that. I need to work on it, and I will."

"Well," Father Hanlon said with a yawn. "I am done. Any other questions?"

The two women gave a negative nod.

Father Hanlon gathered his notes and made a neat pile, and then handed them to Mrs. Fredericks. She added her notes to the pile and passed them on to Sister Claire.

"Well," Sister Claire declared as she placed her notes on top and attached the pile with a large black clip. "Here you go," she said with a smile and handed it to me. "We are not here to judge you," she closed her eyes and opened them. "The only one we can truly judge is ourselves."

"I know," I stood up and tucked the pile of paper under one arm. "But your questioning and your notes are a big help in integrating all of this."

"Personality is always becoming," Father Hanlon said with a wink. He stood up and then we shook hands. Sister Claire and Mrs. Fredericks stood up and I shook their hands as well.

"Thanks," I said with a nod.

spiritual attraction  
in the physical realm of being  
works both ends

i am attracted

*i called to them  
waited,  
persisted,  
and then an unannounced arrival  
cloaked in one of my emotional memories  
inspired me to dream  
or find some written word*

and i attract

*looking back  
sometimes people just showed up in my life  
i hardly knew they were there  
i rarely acknowledged their presence  
and only gave them advice  
when they were in my face*

spiritual attraction  
in the cosmic realm of being

works both ends as well

## ESSAY: SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF PERSONALITY

Does humanity have an innate sense of God? Throughout our history, regardless of geography, culture, or historical era, humankind has pursued the nature, cause, and purpose of the universe. Much of this was driven by our fear of death. Our fear, combined with our ability to reason, gave birth to the idea that there is life after death, and a natural theology evolved.

The journey began with a belief that our destiny, the destiny of our individual and collective lives, is in the hands of the immortals and the gods. As our thinking and reasoning ability continued and monotheism evolved, we came to believe that our destiny is not solely God's will, that we each have our own will, and that destiny for the most part must be a shared responsibility.

One individual's understanding of God and the nature of the universe can be different from that of another person. We are social animals and compelled to share our experiences and perspectives with others. In essence what we share is our interpretation of an experience. This is challenging and a source of conflict for routine events and encounters, and is even more complex when we interpret and share the meaning of a psychic experience. Psychic experiences are unique and personal, and one often walks away with an inspiration to change their behavior or the way they live their lives. Collective sharing and interpretation brings about a moral code, a set of rules that a community agree to follow.

Humankind's compelling need to share consciousness, combined with our capability for individual experience, creates the potential for religion. Religion is a conscious relationship between man and God, and the expression of that relationship becomes human conduct. Different religions represent different relationships, and differing sets of rules. Bundled into the religious experience is a judgment feature, as dogma dictates what is good and what is bad behavior.

Influence and fear of judgment breed belief, particularly in the early stages of human development. Parents, teachers and other authority figures have

tremendous influence on our spiritual maturation and our belief structure. As we mature and our experience grows, we come to challenge what we believe.

The wonderful gift about belief is that it evolves as we evolve, based upon individual experience. However, belief has both rational and emotional components. One may change their belief from a rational perspective based upon knowledge, but an emotional truth may be retained in the subconscious. Emotional truths build over the course of a lifetime, and are sometimes carried over into another life. The emotional truths concerning psychic and religious experience are the foundation of our spiritual orientation, the spiritual aspect of our personality.

Initiation is a way to transform emotional memories and move on. To read and study about spirit is one way to learn, but learning is not complete until there is an application. The ritual aspect of initiation is the starting point for applying or experimenting with new spiritual knowledge. By testing and using new knowledge and what we believe to be true, we transcend reason and intellect and bring in new emotional truth. New emotional truths bring on new aspects of personality, and new or modified traits and preferences.

As is true with other aspects of personality, we come into this incarnation with traits and preferences that are specific to our spiritual orientation. These preferences are based upon the knowledge and experience we gained in prior lives, and the emotional memories we carry with us. Our environment, including the people in our lives, can bring forward, repress or alter these preferences.

Identifying preferences enables us to categorize and label personality types. Many psychologists have attempted to categorize the different types of personality, and Carl Jung has perhaps the greatest reputation in this area. The labels that psychologists came up with are a source of conflict for many, as labels are restrictive. Word choices can also be misleading and offensive. However, labels can also help us to understand who and what we are as well as how we are different from other people. An awareness of difference



can breed a greater acceptance of others. As we come to understand the perspective of others, and their orientation, we better understand our own.

Perhaps the best way to identify preferences and determine an appropriate label is to do it yourself. We can seek an opinion from other people, understand their criteria and perspective, but it has little meaning if the self cannot validate it. You are who you think you are, and other people can think of you as they choose, independent of whatever you may think. The greatest risk in all of this is the temptation to judge personality types as good or bad. However, if we do not judge what is the purpose of a label? A positive good that can come from exploring labels, or different aspects of personality, is acceptance of self and awareness of difference. Acceptance and awareness breed personal growth.

Carl Jung was one of the few, if not the only one, who commented on the spiritual aspect of preferences. Unfortunately, he didn't research or create any labels for spiritual traits and preferences. In the world of spirit and the occult, labels take on another perspective. It is the perspective of systems such as astrology and numerology. These systems also create labels. Their intention is typically forecast and prediction, but in truth the users of psychological systems often have the same intention. The difference, however, is that these individuals use psychological systems to understand the personality and behavior of others, where as users of occult systems are typically more interested in what the labels have to say about them, and their spiritual and material welfare.

Both the psychological and occult systems of labeling foster an understanding of preferences and behavior, as well as an awareness of individual differences. Unfortunately, neither have much to offer in understanding an individual's spiritual orientation and how it may or may not change in the course of a lifetime.

Spiritual orientation has to do with an individual's intellectual and emotional understanding of the world beyond the physical. It is an integration of psychic and religious experience, as well as the culmination of spiritual and religious belief that has its source in the books we read and study, the

organizations we belong to, as well as the people in our environment who influence our thinking and belief structure.

Spiritual orientation and personality types range from having a preference for following to a preference for initiation and first hand knowledge. In between these two types are what can be described as doubters, and those who are beyond doubt and can best be described as curious.

Understanding of cosmic law for people with a preference for following comes more from the world of belief, rather than personal experience and knowledge. People who are truly initiate types are looking for personal experience and enlightenment. The person who has a preference for following can be very offended by the person who has a preference for initiation because they appear to be intentionally not obeying God's law. For the initiate, a follower can be an obstacle in their personal journey.

Perhaps the greatest delineator of type is one's interpretation of psychic experience, and their intentional or non intentional nature. For followers, these experiences are miracles and are not consciously intended. For doubters, there is some scientific aspect taking place that they do not understand. Psychic experience is intentional, but the intention is not understood. For the curious, psychic experiences are mostly non intentional and they reside in the subconscious. For the initiate, the journey of psychic experience is about freeing them from the subconscious in a rehearsal for conscious and intentional psychic experience.

The bridge that transcends all types is love. When one feels worthy of loving themselves, and of God's love, other traits and preferences are no longer a threat or an obstacle. In essence, spiritual orientation itself is a journey.

Spiritual orientation is a journey that makes its transition in dream and meditation. Dream and reflective thought are the alchemy that alters personality. Personality is always becoming.



in sleep  
i dream of  
a cosmic internship  
and long to be  
like those personalities  
who are helping me

in meditation  
i surrender  
to cosmic need,  
visualizing  
communion  
with a band  
of spirits

facilitators of the heart  
blend and focus;  
invite questions,  
then listen  
to an open soul  
in need of reflection

## MY EVOLVING CREED: PERSONALITY

1. I believe that personality is an attribute of soul, and that preferences, attributes, traits and other aspects of personality are an integration of numerous soul personalities
2. I believe that religious and psychic experience create a spiritual orientation that become one aspect of personality
3. I believe that we are greatly influenced by other personalities, and that drama is opportunity to discover and exchange attributes of personality
4. I believe that drama occurs on both physical and astral levels, and that there is a link between the lower astral levels and mental illness
5. I believe that humans have limited emotional capability, and that love is the ultimate emotional state
6. I believe that love is ultimate natural law and the cause of attraction of opposites
7. I believe that the integration of knowledge and experience occurs in dream, and that personality is continually becoming

Cluster 6:

*Flavors of Knowing*

## SUMMARY OF CLUSTER 6: FLAVORS OF KNOWING

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A memory of a broken crucifix triggers another memory about a childhood discussion about right and wrong religion. The memories replay themselves in dream, and a dialogue takes place about truth and what happens when people die.
- What's Your Truth?* 307  
Two preachers in dream time compete in recruiting followers, and leading their congregations to discover truth. A consultant agrees to write a script for a half way covenant, and then presents an alternative approach to public confession. Conversations about the approach lead to a discovery about the relationship between spiritual desire and truth.
- Essay: Fragments of Truth in Dream* 315  
The nature of memory and dream are discussed and an analysis of dream types is presented, along with the fragments of psychological, emotional, and psychic truth that can be decoded from dreams.
- Experiment: Discovering Truth In Dream* 318  
Questions to consider when reflecting on the nature of a dream, the personal truth it might hold, and how a new personal truth might alter your belief structure or personal creed.
- Just Tell It Like It Is* 319  
Memories of dreams and encounters with spiritualists and psychics produce dialogues about the nature of knowledge, psychic development, and how truth and understanding are relative.
- Essay: The Art of Knowing* 331  
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*My Evolving Creed: Knowledge* 334  
A list of relative, personal truths about the nature of knowledge and personal truth.

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<i>i know my truth</i>	291
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<i>i think, I feel</i>	306
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i know my truth  
but sometimes i develop a  
don't ask don't tell  
relationship  
with consciousness

when someone  
threatens my truth,  
the unknown warriors of subconscious  
defend me  
with  
emotional truth

and i slip  
into a surrender  
that gives into reason  
and i discover new truth

again, and again and again

2 shamans on strings  
came at me  
and spun like yoyos  
on each side of my  
head

they each spoke at the same time  
and  
their words were filled with doom and gloom  
and i asked them to stop spinning

their eyes  
told me  
more than their words  
and when they continued to stare at me  
i took away their power by staring back

i asked them  
how come they  
focused so much on the negative  
and the man shaman  
he said  
it was just like the news  
and the transvestite shaman she said  
you have to tell them what they want to hear

i asked them what  
they knew about the magic of belief  
and i could tell they knew  
but they were silent  
and looked down

i turned into a yo yo  
and spun as their magician  
and at one point  
i asked them how we know what we know  
and we all disagreed

but continued to spin  
i told my physical senses  
to play nice  
with my psychic senses  
but they never learned to trust one another

truth is such a personal, perceptual thing

is it? isn't it ?  
the ultimate question, is it now?

i told my psychic senses  
to play nice  
with the 3 flavors of intuition:  
me, you, out there

i found out that  
non truth is not intentional, it just is

lies are intentional

my search for truth  
comes with a warning:

feelings about non truth can become imaginary lies;  
from lies and imaginary lies, drama happens

mix it up.  
it's the blend of ingredients  
that brings out the flavor

*me? i'm just a pronoun in the recipe  
i taste knowledge with my head  
i taste knowledge with my heart*

my my my, i i i  
that's why your knowledge  
is different from my knowledge

what about nous?

*the key ingredient*

*we all have divine mind  
tucked deep inside the pocket of self  
like a memory?  
no. it's part of me. it keeps my heart beating  
seeing is believing  
don't believe it all,  
the senses are surface knowledge.  
take away the body and what do you have?*

yes, knowing isn't always truth

*divine knowledge just is*  
of course it is  
but it is filtered by your head, your heart

*and your head and your heart*  
so we are both correct

*how lonely*  
knowledge is like reality,  
i make mine and you make yours

but when we share heart and mind  
we share understanding of nous within

and our understanding blends  
...or we make war

## A BROKEN CRUCIFIX

“Don’t you know you’re going to hell?” Amy looked at me with sad eyes. She was seven years old.

“No you don’t understand,” I looked her square in the eye. “Your God isn’t the real God. You just don’t know the truth. It’s you who will be going to hell if you don’t change.” I was nine years old. We stood in the semi lit basement and Amy’s eyes were wide. “It’s not your fault,” I stepped closer to her and tried to be compassionate. “You can change.”

“No, you are wrong.” She stepped back and studied me as though I were the devil. “How can God have a son?” She placed both hands on her hips and leaned forward. “It just doesn’t make sense.”

“You don’t believe in the trinity?” I asked in shock, imagining a halo over my head.

“Of course not.” She shook her head emphatically. “We believe that we are all the children of God.”

I shook my head as I considered the possibility. “That makes sense,” I leaned back on the workbench and a crucifix fell to the floor. I picked it up and imagined it was some kind of sign, an object that would protect me from temptation.

“So is Jesus a saint?” She asked as she studied me clutching the crucifix.

“No,” I said automatically. “Jesus is the son of God. The saints are just holy people.”

“It’s too confusing. We only pray to God,” she said proudly. “Do you think Jesus is in there?” She pointed at the crucifix.

I looked down at the crucifix and my finger rubbed where the head had broken off. “No,” I shrugged stupidly. “It’s a reminder that God died for our sins.” I swayed to and fro and thought about why the crucifix was in



the basement. My mother put it there because she couldn't throw it away. Maybe there was some magical power in it. "So are you learning Jewish stuff today?"

"I have my Hebrew class this morning." She gave me half a smile. "I better go now."

"Ok," I shook my head and reached for the light string above us. We stood in the darkness for a moment and Amy started to cry. "I know the way," I took her hand and we walked toward the light of the back door.

"Bye," she said running from the house to the driveway next door.

I watched her get in the car as her parents drove her away, then went back into the basement in search of glue. I found a tube next to a model car that I was building, and took it into the section of the basement with the workbench and pulled the light string above my head. On the bench was the broken head of Jesus. I glued it back onto the crucifix but I couldn't get it straight. Later that day I rolled the crucifix in an old newspaper and wrapped it in masking tape, and then walked outside and dumped it into a big metal garbage pail.

\* \* \*

Amy never left home. She's lived in the same house all her life. Amy just showed up like neighbors often do, and you find yourself sharing the details of your life at the moment. Over the years you truly get to know one another, even though you don't know one another at all. She showed up at the tag sale when my mother moved into a nursing home. She showed up when I went back east to clean out the house and got it really to sell. She didn't show up often. There were times growing up when she didn't show up for months. Our conversations were always very matter of fact. We were blunt with one another in a very impersonal, efficient way.

"Why are you thinking about Amy all of a sudden?" I asked myself in a half sleep and opened one eye to look at the digital clock.

"I hope she is well," the one eye closed. "I hope the chemo is working."

"Who broke the crucifix?" An adult Amy showed up in a dream.

"No one, I think it fell off the wall." We were standing in her driveway in the morning twilight, looking up at the sky and wondering when the snow would start.

"That was the first time I met someone else's God."

"Me too," she pulled down her cap so it covered her ears.

"It's so weird I am not even cold and I don't have a coat." I studied her head and wondered if her hair had fallen out. A short blonde sprig stuck out on one side of her neck.

"Yeah," she made a shivering motion but I knew she wasn't cold. "So how's Gerry?"

"You don't remember? He died." I said flatly and continued to study her head. I thought that maybe it was a wig. How odd that she was blonde again. She was blonde as a kid but as she grew older her hair became darker, and over the years there were times when she dyed it dark brown or black. It made her look sick.

"Sorry," the little girl in her showed up in her eyes and they grew wet and teary. It was the first time since that childhood conversation in the basement that I saw her cry. Amy did not show emotion. "So I still look like that, only now I am sick." She quickly dried her eyes and stood there with a flat, sober expression.

"Oh," I realized that we were totally open to one another and that she felt what I was thinking. I was always absent minded around Amy. I was forever insulting her and didn't realize it until after the fact. I looked up at the sky and then at the house. "They said on the news that a big snow storm would be hitting the east coast this morning. I wonder how much snow we'll get."

“Do you miss the snow?”

“A little,” I admitted. “I always liked the first snow of the season, but after that you can keep it.”

“Do you think we’re dreaming, or is this some kind of astral experience?” Amy looked at me and then looked down.

“Well if we’re dreaming it’s my dream because I can’t dream for you,” I looked at her. “And if I’m dreaming then you aren’t really here. You are my creation, my projection of who I think you are.”

“Does it really matter?” Amy gave me her bored, matter of fact expression. “Maybe it’s a little of both,” her wide eyes were suddenly in my face. “Truth is, you were thinking of me and that was sweet.”

“So do you think the chemo is working?”

“Not yet,” she looked away. “I mean I don’t know.”

“It was on my mind and I knew you would be able to tell that I was thinking about it, so I had to ask.”

“It’s ok,” she was flip and rocked back and forth with her hands in her pockets. “You know there was magic in that crucifix. Your mother put it there.”

“Funny how we come full circle, isn’t it?”

“You said at one point you studied the Kabala.”

“I did,” I shuffled my feet. “But I didn’t get it. I just didn’t get it.” I shook my head. “So many symbols, I just had a hard time.”

“I tried it,” Amy shrugged.

“I remember looking at your Hebrew books, and how you proudly flipped the pages backward and explained that it was very ancient writing.”

“Umm.” Amy moved one foot forward, then raised it a couple of inches and swung her leg back and forth. “The broken crucifix is quite symbolic isn’t it?”

“Umm.” I imitated her foot and leg movement, but let my foot ride the pebbles instead of raising it in the air. “How was it symbolic for you?”

“I never met anyone else’s God either.” She gave me a stare knowing she was using my words, and her eyes told me that this was intentional and not at all incidental. “The crucifix was broken,” she shrugged matter of factly. “And religion was broken. That’s the symbol.” She stood motionless for a moment and looked down. “And I’m not talking your religion,” she said defensively. “I mean religion in general.” She paused for a moment. “I remember you trying to figure out what a conservative Jew was,” she laughed. “We weren’t very conservative growing up,” she shook her head. “Maybe when I was really little, but,” her foot was off the ground again and began to sway. “We were really quite liberal, and when I think back on it you were pretty liberal Catholics.”

“We were.” I looked at Amy.

“Freaked me out when I would see that Menorah in the picture window.” Amy laughed. What freaked me out even more was your mother saying that she didn’t know that’s what it was. It was a just a pretty decoration to her.”

“Not exactly,” I squinted. “There was something else going on there that had some subconscious elements. My mother used to tell me that when she was a little girl she used to sneak into the synagogue and go up to the second floor and just watch. She said she didn’t know why, but she was fascinated by whatever was going on.” I stood motionless for a moment.

“Weird.” Amy shook her head. “Weird but meaningful.”

"For me, religion is weird. It's almost fairy tale."

"And we, as kids even, questioned it." Amy laughed. "How was the broken crucifix symbolic for you?"

I shrugged and continued my imitation of her foot movement. "It's like religion is an imitation of something grander, like spiritual knowledge and truth."

"Still it's who we are," she shrugged. "It's our orientation, and it can be an emotional comfort. She yawned. "Sorry," she apologized. "That's where I am now."

"That's where my mother was with the menorah. Sometimes I imagine that it was a past life thing for her but it could just have been a very strong series of emotional memories as a child."

"So your mother picked up some spiritual knowledge?"

"She did," I looked at her. "And the knowledge had nothing to do with religion."

Amy was silent and gave me a funny look.

"It's that idea of someone else's God, and being open to it."

Amy was still silent and stood with her mouth open.

"When we were kids and had those conversations I had a couple of things happening on an emotional level. My gut was telling me that I should either be angry with you or feel sorry for you, because my religion was the right one. My heart, however, told me that you were a good person and that maybe your religion was a possibility."

"So what was the spiritual knowledge?"

"Simply that there is no right or wrong religion."

"I agree," she batted her eyelashes. "But how did you come to that conclusion?"

"A balance of head and heart," I studied her eyes. "I listened to what my heart and gut were telling me, and I used reason to figure out what was true." I put my hands in my pocket. "What did you mean when you said my mother put magic in the crucifix?"

She gave me a coy look. "What did you mean when you said we came full circle?"

"Just that there is a little pagan in all of us." I took my hands out of my pockets and stood with my arms folded. "And that we have come full circle in terms of religious belief." My hands dropped to my side. "I have a sense that you are implying something else. Are you?"

Her eyes grew wide as she studied me. It wasn't in my character to be so direct with her, although that's how we were as kids. "Your mother put so much of her in what was around her." Amy looked me directly in the eye. "You do that too." She nodded affirmatively. "Whenever I walked into your house and saw a crucifix or a statute I became sort of defensive but," she took on a flustered look. "It wasn't religious at all," she shook her head in the negative. "They had a power. The power was your mother's belief. There was protection," she squinted her eyes. "I don't know how you could ever have thrown that crucifix away."

"I had to," I shrugged. "It wasn't just the crucifix that was broken. The thoughts inside it were broken too." I shrugged again. "I guess that's cruel but to be honest I had a sense even then that my mother was disillusioned by religion. The magic she put in the crucifix was about guilt, about sin, and God getting even." I looked down. "My mother was intimidated by a crucifix, a statue of the virgin Mary." I looked up and shook my head. "The magic she put in them reached out to me too." I pursed my lips. "And I couldn't handle that," I shook my head in the negative.

"Magic is all about belief, isn't it?"

"It is," I nodded. "And the belief can be a predictor, a controller of how we behave in the mundane world." I looked at Amy. "That's where the power is. What you felt in the crucifix was what I felt too. And for each of us, in our own way, couldn't take it in as a core belief, and we couldn't allow the power to manifest and control our actions."

Amy smiled and slipped into a nervous shiver. "I wonder how much of all of that influences what we experience after death," Amy yawned. "I am so tired." Her eyes half closed. "Do you think our beliefs have an impact on what happens to us after death?"

Although I wasn't cold I shivered too. "Of course they do."

"Do you know that or do you just believe it?" She didn't blink and her eyes were still. Suddenly they moved and found my eyes and the stare was very intense.

"Knowledge is a queer concept. How do we truly know anything? I mean I know things through intellect, by study and learning. I know things on an emotional level too, you know, by what I am feeling in my gut or my heart. Of course I also know things based upon what I perceive with my senses."

"And what about knowledge that comes to you psychically?"

"What about it?" I snapped back automatically with an edge of defense.

"Is it any more reliable than the senses? Then thinking or feeling?"

"Well," I bowed my head. "In its pure form it is, but how the self perceives, interprets and integrates a psychic experience is where things become a little shakey." I looked at her. "What I know may be different from what you know, even though we may have had the same experience." I looked down again and then up, "And that's ok." I nodded. "The other really important thing about psychic knowledge or information is that it isn't always initiated by the divine or a divine essence. What comes to you in a dream or meditation doesn't always come from God. It can come from another entity, another person."

"You didn't answer my question," she rocked back and forth and laughed. "What do you know as truth about the nature of reality after death?"

"If you psychically pick up information from me, I mean like telepathically, well that may not be truth for you." I looked at Amy. She was skinny and withdrawn and in that instance I knew she was worried about death. "I no have absolute truth." I shook my head.

Amy's face fell and she stepped back. "So you're not an angel taking on an identity that I know?"

"Oh come one," I nodded in the negative. "You didn't really think that did you?" I gave her a coy look and started to laugh.

"Not really," she laughed with a disappointed expression and started to shiver again. "I have to go in. I have to sleep."

"Ok," I stepped back. "The one thing I do know is that thinking about God and focusing on love really helps me understand and puts things into perspective. Talk about magic, wow, that's the real transformer. And if I am open to it, true knowledge comes." I stepped back a few more feet as though I were going home, then realized I didn't live there anymore. "Try it."

i feel, i think  
i know, i know

i believed in *Hell*  
in *Dante's Inferno* and *Rosemary's Baby*,  
i believed in *Werewolves* and *Vampires*  
*Witches* and *Goblins*  
the *Holy Ghost* and *Frankenstein*

all of it swirled in my head  
in a desperate comparative seach;  
knowing builds on what is known  
on what is given and what is shown

i believed in *Purgatory*  
and *Santa Claus*  
the *Virgin Mary*  
and the *Wizard of Oz*

and one day in high school  
i gave it all up  
and declared myself an atheist,  
a believer in nothing

*Nothing, Nothing*  
how can you believe that *Nothing* can exist  
when *Being* is *All*?

a school boy in psychic pain  
i studied the wall  
and for the first time i talked to God.  
i said please, give me a sign  
and the wall changed and i changed and i knew, i just  
knew

## WHAT'S YOUR TRUTH?

I imagined I was some American Adam. I drifted in space and descended to an American Eden that was a combination of the east and west coasts. It was Colonial America, and yet it was a combination of discovered and undiscovered territories and a blend of the nineteenth and twenty first centuries. I found myself in uptown Hooterville, a Southwestern town with box stores and a stagecoach and semi explored mountains in the background. I went shopping for shoes and a blacksmith in an apron told me about two tunnels to explore.

The two tunnels lead to God and I found out they that were owned by two separate preachers. Each preacher had their own congregation and their own set of rituals as they routinely pilgrimaged their way to the light with new groups of people. I met the short preacher first. He was standing in front of his tunnel and I thought he was going to ask me for money and give me a ticket, but instead he asked me a string of questions and then let me proceed into the tunnel. A look of shock overcame his face when I showed up in the same spot two hours later, as though he wasn't expecting me to ever return. Later I met the tall preacher, and he too pummeled me with questions and then let me explore his tunnel.

As I was walking back down the mountain I saw an internet café and decided to check my email. I had a message from each of the preachers. Each of them were trying to recruit me to lead a group through their tunnel. I was intrigued by their offers, and thought it might be rewarding to take a journey with a sincere group of people who were in search of light. There were perks too. I was new in Hooterville and didn't know anyone. Although I really didn't care to socialize with these people, I was lonely. I also was in need of a little more cash, and these were paying jobs. I could not decide which one to work for, as I had no preference in terms of the ritualistic approaches I witnessed in each tunnel.

I decided to work for the short preacher. He had a nice smile and bright white teeth. The tall preacher was angry when he found out. He watched me gathering people together in front of the short preacher's tunnel. He tried to hide his anger.

"I can pay you twice as much," his hand went up in the air with a closed fist. "Triple," the fist went up and down.

"Thanks for the offer," I scratched my head wondering how he could possibly afford to pay me that much. "But I've made a commitment and I need to honor it."

He smiled and looked down but didn't say anything.

I crawled on my hands and knees in the tunnel with a group of people behind me. We traveled for some time and tumbled into a criss cross of tunnels that created a natural intersection. The tall preacher was sitting up on the rocks to the left of the criss cross. He was whittling something with a knife. I asked the group to take a break and went up the rocks to talk with the tall preacher.

The tall preacher had a bright flashlight on his head. "Is that the way to the other tunnel?" I asked and looked up at him with a squint.

"Yes siree." He said in sing song and motioned with his head. "And that way there is my tunnel to the light." A western drawl lingered in the lower portion of his face and he paused to look down at me. "There be two more tunnels off my tunnel that ain't been explored yet." His lips parted and remained open while his head nodded to one side like a cowboy. "Wishin' you would change your mind." He continued to speak without looking up and continued to widdle. "Them there people." He motioned with his chin. "Be a shame if they got damned for following the wrong path."

"Like I said." I started to laugh. "I made a commitment."

"The lord don't mind." A cowboy expression remained on his face and he stood up. "If you are one of those homo," his voice dropped. "Sexuals." He made a sucking sound with his front teeth and then spit. "Nope," the head shook slowly both ways. "The lord don't mind at all."

I ignored him and starting walking toward the people who were resting at the criss cross. The short preacher was standing behind them. "You didn't

tell me you were one of them." He said with a stern face when I approached the group. "You practicin?" His eyelids lowered half way down and he gave me a disgusted look.

I said nothing and communicated with my eyes. "You didn't ask and I didn't tell," I took on the facial expression of the tall preacher. "It's irrelevant anyway. I am doing what you hired me to do."

"You're going to hell." He said with a high pitched assuredness and his eyes grew wide.

I motioned to the people in the distance and asked everyone to stand around me. I told them that the light at the end of the tunnel was about love and that if we followed the short preacher's tunnel there would be treacherous passages of darkness.

The tall preacher stood up proudly and I motioned to him with my hand as I announced that I was going to explore one of the unknown tunnels. I invited the group to join me.

"This way," I motioned with my hand and headed in the direction of the tall preacher.

About three quarters of the group followed me and in a short while we discovered the new tunnel. As we continued to hike it grew darker and there was a cool, earthy scent all around us. "Think light," I announced to the group as we continued to march forward.

"It doesn't work!" I heard someone scream in panic at the back of the line. "It's too dark. I'm going back."

I heard him shuffle and run and I stopped to turn around. Each person had a bright hallow around their heads, and in the soft light I could see peace in their eyes and a man running in the distance. I continued to march and soon could see light at the end of the tunnel.

"What do you think is on the other side?" Someone behind me asked.



"I don't know," I said honestly as we approached the end of the tunnel. In the distance I could see an old church.

I climbed out of the tunnel and to the top of a hill. I stood there watching as each person came out of the hole. The last person to come out was the tall preacher.

"You?" I made a funny face.

"I sure do like you," he shrugged. "And maybe you can save us."

"Oh get out," I laughed. "No one needs saving. I am not taking on that kind of thing."

\* \* \*

I followed the tall preacher to a room behind the church. We were both dressed like 18<sup>th</sup> century pilgrims, but I was wearing cowboy boots. The shirt was tight and I poked inside the collar with a forefinger.

"We got this new deal," the preacher imitated me by poking a finger in his collar. "As you know the only way to becomin' a member of this church is when God comes to you and tells you personally that you been saved." He scratched his head. "The problem we got now is that not many people be gettin' a personal message from God. Our congregation is piddlin' out." He leaned forward in the chair opposite me. "So now we got a half way covenant thing." A broad smile overcame his face. "Yes sir," he nodded proudly. "People out there can join our church if they confess their sins to me and the congregation."

"So where do I come in?" I asked flatly and shook my head. "What do you want me to do?"

"People have a hard time expressing themselves." The tall preacher rubbed his chin. "Not only that," his bushy eyebrows furled. "People need to think about what they done, reflect on it, you know." He rubbed his chin, "It would be more fittin if the person had someone to talk to about it, and ifin'

they had a script to follow when they stood in front of the congregation." He gave a little laugh. "It would sure help 'um." He shook his head with a cowboy nod. "Gives it a little drama too," he pursed his lips. "And drama is good for the soul."

"And you want me to talk to them and write a script?"

"I do," he rocked back and forth.

"Well you have to give me a list of sins."

"There ain't no complete list," he pushed back from the table and his jaw fell open.

"So they confess whatever they want?"

"Well you'll have to poke 'um a little," he squinted. "Stir things up."

"So it's your basic lying, stealing, killing, that kind of thing?"

"Yeah, that's it, yeah."

"Suppose we change that a little bit. Instead of focusing on sins we have them think about their truth about God and the cosmic, about what they know concerning aspects of spirit." The tall preacher's eyes were wide and I got lost in them as I spoke. "It's not a confession they are doing. What they are doing is re-framing and updating their truth based upon ongoing and new experiences."

"Well then the whole damn thing is metaphysical," the preacher slapped his leg and shook his head. "I don't care for this," he shook his head again.

"It doesn't have to be metaphysical," I found his eyes and remained focused on them. "How do you know when something is true for you?" I put my hand on my stomach and scrunched my face. "Doesn't your body tell you sometimes what is true? Don't you feel it in your gut? And doesn't your



heart tell you what is true based upon whether you feel guilt or remorse, fearful or courageous?”

The preacher stood up and pursed his lips, then shook at his chest as though he were removing crumbs. “I prefer a more behavior based approach.”

“We can be behavior based, but I don’t think you want to get hung up on right behavior and wrong behavior.” I looked at him and nodded in the negative. “Behavior is based upon our personal belief structure, upon our desires and intentions. Someone has to want to change their behavior. It isn’t something you can do for them by telling them that their behavior is wrong or a sin.”

“You put the fear of God in someone,” the preacher sat back down and crossed his arms. “They gunna change.” His eyebrows rose.

“And how has using the fear of God worked for you? I looked him square in the eye. “When you reflect on that experience what does your heart tell you? What does reason tell you?”

The preacher nodded in silence. “You mentioned desire, but you didn’t say anything about spiritual desire.” He looked down and then up. “Spiritual desire is the key. If you have discovered a spiritual truth, and you have a desire for more truth, then there are things you may need to change in your life. There are new things that you need to do.” The preacher bit his lower lip. “A spiritual goal is a true inspiration for change.”

“Exactly,” I smiled. “And in the end it’s more effective then the fear of God.”

“So,” the preacher sat with his hands in his lap. “What does a person say in front of the congregation?”

“Their truth. Their spiritual desire.” I looked away from the preacher. “This changes your role as the preacher. You will have to swallow the holiness stuff.” I looked at him. “But you know how to be a leader, you

know what leadership is all about. You don’t need that ego based preacher stuff, right?”

“Well now that gets to my spiritual truth, doesn’t it?” He leaned back in the chair. “I have to think about that.” He fingered his chin. “What about you? What is your spiritual desire?”

“Well,” I tilted my head to one side. “I have to think about that too.”

my spiritual desire  
was over there  
for a long time

separate  
from the rest of me,  
separate  
from what is around me

i want the physical me  
to be in harmony  
with my spiritual intentions,  
with my head and my heart,  
and  
i want to know, psychically,  
what that harmony may require

i want to be  
intentional  
in my subconscious and conscious  
explorations  
to reach out for light,  
as well as to share light

i want to become whole again,  
not all the time, not every day,  
but at will

## ESSAY: FRAGMENTS OF TRUTH IN DREAM

Think of dreams as being in three flavors that overlap themselves in a gestalt that can best be described as now. Dreams can happen in an instant and are not bound by time. It is when we return to a waking, conscious state that dream activity is sequenced in time like memory, and it is also in this conscious state that we divide dreams into their different flavors or types so that we can understand them. The reality of waking consciousness is different from the actuality beyond time and space. Our reality is often a clinical analysis, a comparison, a method of separation, similar to the way we separate our very being from everything around us. Memory is like a queer relational database in our objective, waking state of awareness. Dreams are mostly forgotten, and it is only aspects of them that we remember. An emotional memory may linger just beneath the surface of consciousness that triggers a fragment of dream experience. One memory triggers another, and yet another and another. On the surface it may seem that all we have are fragments of the experience rather than a memory of the entire experience. Perhaps dreams should be viewed in a different way. Dreams are not like movie clips stored on a technical device. Dreams live beyond time and space. They have no beginning and no end, and there is forever a sequence in the making. Human memory is a creative, associative process.

Finding meaning in dreams is a creative process. Flavors are much more appealing than types, and flavors can nicely overlap. One flavor of dream is plain vanilla. It is the day to day or physiological dream. These dreams happen to me when I have too much to eat or drink, or when my back is sore and I cannot get comfortable in the bed. They also occur when something important or impressive happened during the day or in the recent past. These dreams usually don't make sense to me, and are often annoying. I mix up people and events and places. In my most common physiological dream I am running through an airport, a building or subway in searching of a conference room or classroom, and when I get there I don't know if I am attending or leading. The people can be anyone from my second grade teacher to an old man I saw on the street yesterday. The next thing I know I lost my ticket, ticket to whatever, and I become anxious about what I am suppose to be doing next.

The next flavor of dream is like a blend of different vanillas. It is the psychological dream. These dreams represent my emotional and mental states on both conscious and subconscious levels. These dreams are about self discovery and integration, about mixing the plain vanilla with the imported vanilla bean. This is the place where my personality develops and grows. These are dreams about my passions, about how I am dealing or not dealing with the people in my life, about what brings happiness and what brings joy. These are the dreams where I discovered my sexual identity, my career aspirations, my truth about religion and thirst for spiritual knowledge.

I am the sole producer of these first two flavors of dream. I am the creator, the director, every character, every object, every everything. If I dream about my father or a teacher or the woman in the grocery store, they are not really in my dream. They are my projection of who I think they are, or who I understand them to be. When I don't understand these dreams I role play them. I allow myself in a conscious and awake state to become the lady in the grocery store, the painting on the wall, the shoe that I just can't seem to tie. During the role play I contemplate on what I am feeling and thinking when I am one of these objects or people, and sometimes I will decode a fragment of meaning.

I have little control over the third flavor of dream. They are both no flavor and every flavor. These dreams are spiritual, and often are psychic experiences. They are like a sandbox, a place of foresight and precognition in a safe environment. If I am anticipating an interview I can suddenly be inspired and become aware of hurdles in the interview process. I may have an awareness of a problem or issue and be given the opportunity to play it out in dream time, in advance of the actual event. I might even foresee the outcome.

The psychic dream usually has characters that I cannot identify in a waking state, and they may also take place in a location that I cannot recall. Sometimes there is no specific place. Sometimes there are no animated characters, only faces and expressions. There are times when I initiate these dreams by planting a request in the subconscious for an answer to a question. There are times when they just happen to me, without conscious

control or intention. They happen in a flash and are sandwiched by vanilla dreams that confuse and complicate recall. However, the vanillas are often complementary. They aid in digestion.

Recall is often a confusion of flavors, and often what I recall is a blend. The challenge is in separating the flavors, as it is only in separation that I can extract fragments of meaning. Sometimes there is no meaning, and I've learned that meaning is not always relevant. When there is meaning, the meaning speaks to three aspects of me; physical, spiritual and mental. What do I need to pay attention to concerning my body? What intuitive knowledge or inspiration have I received? How do I feel about what I have experienced? What do I choose to accept as truth and integrate into my evolving soul personality?

There is another important aspect of dream, and that is that one does not need to be asleep to experience a fragment of truth. The experience of dream can happen in meditation, in chant, in the space between breath.

## EXPERIMENT: DISCOVERING TRUTH IN DREAM

1. In a single word or phrase, what was the experience about? What words, symbols, feelings, knowledge come to mind?
2. Describe any physiological memories. How was your body feeling? Is there meaning on a physical level concerning your health, safety, well being?
3. Who are the characters? What is the location? How do they relate to your conscious memory? Do you know them?
4. Is there meaning on a psychological level? Are there issues you are struggling to understand?
5. Is there meaning on a psychic level? Is there new information or experience?
6. What does your heart tell you about the experience? What is the emotional truth?
7. What does your reasoning mind tell you about the experience? What is the intellectual truth?
8. What truth are you willing to accept? How might this truth alter your personal creed, your belief structure?
9. How does the experience affect your spiritual desire? Are you inspired? Can you imagine a part 2?

## JUST TELL IT LIKE IT IS

The shopping center down the street from where I lived in New York had a psychic fair at least twice a year. The sidewalk was lined with tables and booths where tarot card readers, astrologers, and palm readers would offer their services to those who passed by. One day in the fall when they were having a fair I pedaled through on my bicycle, studying the psychics and the psychic consumers. When I overheard something interesting I would pedal closer, one foot on the ground and the other perched on the pedal for an instant escape. Most of the consumers didn't seem to take this sort of thing seriously. Teenage girls and young women would ask questions about when mister right would show up in their lives, or when they were going to get married. They would whisper to one another and giggle. Some of the people, however, were quite serious and wanted to know about past lives or someone close to them who passed away. Some even looked for advice about their career or relationships, and sometimes even their financial affairs. There were times when I overheard warnings of doom and gloom. These forecasts always upset me and I wanted to pull the psychic consumer aside and tell them not to give away their power, that the power of belief was far more powerful than anything a psychic had to say. Sometimes I wanted to pull the psychic aside too, and suggest that he or she focus on the positive instead of dwelling in the negative. I would project my thoughts to the psychic. "Give them hope. Look for opportunity instead of misfortune." I'd close my eyes and let the thought go, then open my eyes and drift away on the bike. The faces at the fair continued to dwell in my head. Sadness would settle in the pit of my stomach as I pedaled on. The faces and feelings would surface again in my dreams. There was little meaning in them from a psychic perspective, but the psychology of it was another realm.

The following Spring I saw a flyer announcing that the fair was returning, and questioned whether or not I wanted to go. "Why would you want to do that?" A voice clicked in the back of my head. "There is nothing there for you."

One early morning in meditation I created a mental cloud and I let it consume me. As I sat in silence a voice welled up within me. "You are feeling isolated, alone. The call to the fair is a call to service." A parade of

faces from the previous fall flashed through my mind. I started to stand up and something within pulled me back down. "I have to get ready for work." I thought defensively and then bowed my head in submission.

"Why not go to the fair and take some AMORC flyers with you?"

I thought about it in the shower and concluded that it was a good idea. I would still take my bike as I did in the fall, but I would leave the flyers on some of the tables as I walked by. I'd watch people, and if any seemed interested I would go over and talk with them. I grew more excited as I continued to think about it through the week.

The Saturday morning of the fair I pedaled past the booths with an open mind. I parked the bike and walked along the curb of the sidewalk with my flyers, wondering where I might be able to leave a few.

"Do you want a reading?" A tall, thin man with a beard asked as he approached.

"Just browsing," I smiled politely and gave him a friendly laugh. "What's your approach?"

"Approach?" He looked behind and scratched his head, and then looked at me.

"Just about everyone I've seen here uses some kind of tool, like tarot cards or something of that nature."

"I read auras," he gave me a smile that bordered on arrogance.

"Really?" I gave him a sideways glance and then straightened my head. "And how do you interpret what you see?"

"I don't, I just tell it like it is."

"Isn't it hard not to be prejudiced?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well a part of self must leak in at times and get in the way."

"I see you feeling coins," his brow furrowed and he looked down and then up. "You have some experience with telekinesis."

"I do," I admitted with a shrug.

"But you chose not to explore it. Why?"

"Because I have not found it to be of value." I looked him in the eye. "Actually, it puts me in an emotional state that isn't pleasant."

"But they are not your emotions."

"That's true," I said and hesitated. "Most of the time."

"You could be of value right here," he said and juttied his neck in and out as he spoke. "You could set up a table at fairs like this one." He gave me a look that reminded me of someone from junior high school. "You're one of us man," an adolescent flare consumed his face.

"Mind if I leave a few of these flyers at your table?"

"Rosicrucian, umm, I know of them." He nodded for a moment in silence. "A little too philosophical for me," he said fingering his chin. "But that's cool, you can leave some material." He nodded again and his neck juttied in an out.

The adolescence that consumed his face returned that night in a dream. I was in the woods behind my junior high school. Three kids from school were sitting on a huge rock in front of me. They were throwing rocks at the windows, and the sound of the crashing rocks echoed in the woods. "Come on," one of them turned to me. "This is really cool. Throw one for the tin man and one for porky."

“No fun,” I retreated further into the woods. The tin man taught metal shop and I suddenly remembered the broken glass and rocks that scattered the room when I went into his class.

In dream time the tin man became the tall thin psychic from the fair, and his face lit up like one of the excited adolescent boys that were throwing rocks at the window. “You knew who did it but you wouldn’t tell, even after he gave that tear jerker speech about the wrath of juvenile delinquents.”

“Of course I didn’t tell.” I gave the psychic a dirty look. “Do you always tell?”

“Tell what?”

“What you see?”

“To be honest I don’t always understand what I see. It can be hard to explain.”

“So you put your own spin to it.”

“Well yeah,” suddenly he became the tin man and his arms crossed. I was sitting on the rock and he was standing over me with the look of a teacher. “Why do you think that mystical schools refrain from talking much about psychic tools like tarot?”

“Probably because people have a tendency to obsess,” I looked down. “We are a lazy species,” I leaned back on the rock and yawned. “It’s that old story about giving away the fish, or teaching the people how to fish.” I looked up. “And the power of thought, the power of belief.”

“You’ve tasted that one, haven’t you?”

“What do you mean?” I sat up straight.

“Well the coins for example. What really happened?”

I gave the teacher a sideways smirk. “Money passes many hands. A collage of emotions consumed me, and I knew they were not my own. There was also a sense of people popping in and out of my head. The emotions ranged from very happy, elated, to very sad and even angry.”

“And what did you do?”

“Well I tried to make sense of it.” I paused. “And in the process of making sense of it, I came to conclusions.” I leaned back on my hands. “Later the conclusions bothered me, and when I tried to go back I couldn’t recall exactly what happened. I couldn’t restring the associations.” I paused and looked away, and then looked up at the tin man. “And nothing happened when I experimented with the coins again.” I looked down again. “Then I started to have similar sensations when scraping paint from old furniture. I changed my mind about what I was experiencing. I was filled with doubt, but it wasn’t doubt about the experience. It was doubt about what it meant.”

“So you came to a conclusion that you believed to be true, and then you doubted your belief. What else?”

“Well I shared my belief.” I squinted and looked away. “When someone shares their belief they can never really take it away, even when they share a revision.” I scratched the palm of my hand. “Influence can be such a subtle process.” I flipped my hand and looked at the other side. “Sharing what you believe can take on a life of its own, and it spirals as belief and knowledge evolve.”

“Think you were a psychic or some kind of soothsayer in another life?”

I nodded affirmatively in silence.

“And in this life?”

“Never,” I shook my head. “In high school I experimented with séances and hypnosis with my friends. The coin thing was later.” I looked up at the

tin man. “Everyone is psychic. I learned that early on in this life. It’s all a matter of degree.”

“So there is an element of skill, capability?”

Again I shook my head in silence. “But it’s not just about skill building and learning, it’s also about application and karma. The capability comes from a marriage of skill and knowledge, and the karma that comes from application.”

I drifted in sleep and thought about the association of skill building, application and karma, and capability. There was a huge gap that concerned me, and it was about truth and the implication that truth shouldn’t matter. Suddenly the tin man was standing before me. “Of course it doesn’t matter,” he laughed. “All truth is relative.”

There was an odd vibration that came from his laugh, and his body trembled. As the trembling continued he faded in and out of view.

“How long have you been an earthling?”

“As long as I can remember,” I cocked my head and studied the face that constantly shimmered in movement. “How long have you been an alien?”

“About as long,” the head bopped up and down.

I knew it was Dr. Smith, but I didn’t let on that I knew who he really was. He didn’t remember me. Actually, he never really knew me. I was a client who went to him for psychic readings every now and then. I never knew if it would be him or Mrs. Smith who would do the reading. I would sit in front of one of them and they would look to the side of me and talk. The Smiths were a husband and wife psychic team who ran a church in a wealthy suburb of New York City. Although they were not the norm in any sense of the word, they appeared the norm on the surface. The church had everything my young mind identified as protestant, including the parishioners who for the most part were wealthy. My friends called it the spook church. It was during my late teens and early twenties that

I visited the spook church. Many of the people who went to the church were motivated by the prospect of being able to communicate with a loved one who passed away. The Smiths would take turns during the Sunday service to acknowledge the spirits in the room, and communicated their message with the loved ones sitting in the audience.

“You still do readings?”

The eyes nearly popped out of the alien’s head. “Why do you ask?” The head stopped shimmering and faded in and out of view.

“I’m an alien too,” I shrugged. “We are all aliens.”

I was suddenly sitting in one of Mrs. Smith’s classes about the human aura. “We are all psychic,” she said to me after the class. “It’s all a matter of psychic development.”

“You don’t remember what you tell people, do you?”

Mr.’s Smith cocked her head and turned into Dr. Smith. “Why, was it something I said?”

“No, no,” I nodded in the negative. Suddenly I was sitting in a rocking chair across from him. He looked at me and then looked over my head. “I mean I was infatuated by what you might be able to tell me, but to be frank I wasn’t impressed. It was what you said to two of my aunts that I sent to you.”

“What did I say?”

“Whatever it was, you impressed them. They had each lost a husband and you were able to talk about each of them in a very personal way. You told them things that only they would know.” I paused and looked at him. He wasn’t an alien anymore. He was an old man. “They never told me exactly what you said.”

“But it made an impression,” he nodded.



“Do you ever question what you see or feel? How do you know if it is authentic?”

“Because it doesn’t come from me,” he smiled politely. “What I tell people doesn’t come from me, it isn’t my creation.” His eyes half closed and opened wide. “Do you think there is some fabrication on my part?”

“Umm,” I hesitated. “Not exactly. I do believe that something psychic is going on, I am just not sure what.” I looked him in the eye. “Don’t you think that at times it is a transfer of thought that you are experiencing?”

“You are right,” he said matter of factly. “There are times that I what pick up are the thoughts of another person, and there is no other entity present.” He looked down and then up. “It is never my intent, I mean to read exclusively from the thought and energy of the person I am reading.” He rubbed the palms of his hands together. “That isn’t usually the case.” His hands found his lap and settled comfortably. “To be honest it is usually a combination of the two.”

“And how do you know that it isn’t an impersonator, someone who isn’t really who you think they are at all?”

“There is that possibility,” he smiled and clasped his hands. “That’s why I don’t rely on one method or medium.”

“I’ve never seen you use another medium, like tarot cards or anything like that.”

“The medium does not have to be physical object.” He laughed playfully. “It can be conceptual, knowledge based.”

“I see,” I said politely and slowly swayed to and fro.

“I told you things that didn’t happen, didn’t I?” He reached out and touched my hand.

I looked at him but said nothing.

“Sometimes things do not happen,” he said as he looked down and then at me. “You must remember our discussion about free will, about choice.”

“I do,” I shook my head. “And that is probably one of the greatest things that I learned from you.”

“What’s that?” His eyebrows rose.

“That psychic insight is about possibility, not prediction.” I fingered my chin with my hand. “When I think back on my readings with you, the broader perspective was far more accurate than the details.” My hands found my lap and I cocked my head. “You have some pretty solid counseling skills too,” I straightened my head and nodded. “What I have really admired and learned from you is how to maintain a positive approach, and how to look for opportunity in every experience.”

“What about truth?”

“It’s relative.”

“Relative too?” He cocked his head and then faded from view.

In restless sleep I thought about the nature of truth, but my thinking wasn’t rational. Suddenly the thought popped into my head that truth doesn’t matter. The thought was very comfortable and I surrendered to it. “How stupid,” I looked at myself in a mirror. It was the spooky mirror from my childhood bedroom that cast strange and unusual reflections. “Of course it matters,” I looked at the back of the mirror and saw that some of the backing was chipped away. Portions of the mirror were like smoked glass, and there were portions you could nearly see through. “Truth may be relative, but within that window of relativity lives individual truth.” I looked into the mirror and studied my reflection. “It’s very important that I live my truth.”

I woke up in dreamtime and found myself in my childhood bedroom. I lay there in bed, a dream within a dream, studying the reflections in the old mirror. I remembered the vision of two Africans holding spears. They

were standing back to back. They separated like curtains on a stage. I remembered the dream from years and years ago. I remember that when the Africans parted and the mirror became a stage that I was merely watching a dream, and then all of a sudden I wasn't just watching it, I was in it. I studied the mirror and tried to bring back the Africans, the stage, and the dream when I was nineteen years old. I couldn't get it to come back and I lay there frustrated. Suddenly an old man appeared in the mirror, and I knew the old man was me.

"Are you a reflection?" I asked the mirror.

"Think of me as some kind of broadcast."

"It's not the best picture."

"It's 1969. We don't have high definition TV yet. We don't even have cable."

"I was concentrating on that dream from long ago, but I just can't bring it back."

"You know what happens when you try to recall a dream?"

"Dreams don't exist in that reality. There is no box set of the dreams stored on DVD that I can refer to. Dreams happen in now. There is no beginning and no end."

"That's true," the old man nodded. "But there is a theme." He looked into my eyes. "Certainly you recall the theme."

"It was about knowledge, about how you know what is really true."

"It was also about choice. You were right in your thinking that truth is relative, and you are also right in your thinking that it does matter whether or not something is true." He put a finger to his lips and then removed it. "Why did you stop pursuing the Spiritualist church and your other new age inquiries?"

"Well it started to feel very empty, like there was nothing there for me. I had a lot of questions and knew it was time to pursue a different path."

"What about you? What did you learn about your own psychic ability?"

"Well," I hesitated. "That it was just a small taste of my potential, of anyone's potential."

"And how do you know when something is true?"

"Well what's true for me may not be true for someone else, so it's back to relativity again."

"We are not talking about anyone else. How do you know when something is true for you?"

"Reason," I shrugged. "And emotion." I shrugged again. "When there is a balance of the two."

"And when there is imbalance?"

"Well," I hesitated. "That's where I am confronted with choice. Imbalance is not always a bad thing. It can also be opportunity."

"And you took advantage of the opportunity from the dream. The opportunity was in experimenting or applying the psychic development you acquired in this and previous lives. What you learned is that you still had much to learn."

"You are right. The dream I was trying to recall was a series of dreams in my teens and twenties. I was very much challenging the knowledge and truths that I acquired. It was a very experimental period in my life, and I knew it was time to stop." I looked up at the mirror feeling a little embarrassed. "It was a haughty period too. I came to realize that I needed to focus on what I didn't know, not what I knew."

"Tell me about the small voice within, the fear."

My stomach did a flip flop and I looked down. “It was about sharing and influence,” I looked up and then into the old man’s eyes. “It wasn’t a karma thing really,” I said defensively. “It was the influence that I had on others who were at the same stage of development, and their influence on me.”

“And today?”

“Well there is some of that challenge, but it is more about confirmation.”

“If a client or friend came to you with misinformation, say about the nature of anxiety attacks that they were having, would you correct them.”

“Oh yes, of course.”

“Just say it like it is, that is what this new dream is telling you.”

## ESSAY: THE ART OF KNOWING

Knowing is a psychological process that results in a sum or range of one’s perception, learning and reasoning. Science is organized knowledge that is agreed upon by a group of specialized people who experiment and test what they believe to be true, and are in agreement with conclusive results. A major focus of science is the physical world, although the inner worlds of consciousness and spirit are becoming more the focus of science.

We are each endowed with five physical senses and five psychic senses. Much of the knowledge we obtain from the physical world we can accredit to our perceptual ability, particularly sight and sound. We have come to learn, however, that there are colors and emanations that the eyes cannot see and sounds that the human ear cannot hear. Some would say that the psychic senses have the capability to experience the totality of all sight and sound. Although this may be true, there is no way of really knowing. When we experience something psychically, the only way to recall it is by using our brain. The process of recall is a process of association, and consequently the art of knowing is a process of associating what is already known. If I perceive a color psychically, the only way that I can explain and begin to understand it is to compare it to other colors and experiences.

One can experience knowing without the desire to know, but when there is desire the will is propelled to obtain it. As a child there were two mysteries that consumed me with a desire to know. One was why women have babies, and the other was what happens when people die. The knowledge about birth came to me in pieces from a variety of sources including kids in my class, older children in the neighborhood, and pornographic literature. Through a process of association and reasoning I figured it out and obtained knowledge. It is important to acknowledge that I didn’t figure out all of it, I didn’t come to know and understand the details of the biological process. The only knowledge I truly acquired was about the act that initiated pregnancy. The knowledge I received was enough to satiate the desire. With it came an awareness that I could acquire every detail of the biological facts if I so desired. The awareness brought peace.

Emotion is bundled into the process of association. It can enhance, shade or restrict understanding. When I first heard about intercourse the thought was revolting. You put what were? Why would anyone want to? Do they have to? Will I have to when I grow up? Reasoning is also bundled into the process of association. It began to make sense that some adults might enjoy this act of intercourse, and that the process might result in pregnancy. The gift of understanding comes from a balance of thought and emotion.

The desire to find out what happens when people die has been a life long quest, and the desire has never been completely satiated. In our own way we each come to understand that knowledge comes to us from two different sources. One source is the physical world, and the other is a psychic source from within.

The art of knowledge brings with it a nuance of truth. Truth is relative to the individual, to the information and experience the self has acquired. Relative truths change as we acquire new knowledge. When I discovered spiritualism I thought I had found the answer to my question about what happens when people die. After years of inquiry and study about the psychic body, I came to understand that what I thought was true was misleading. The academic truths were also shattered when people close to me passed on. My knowledge opened a door to new experience and understanding that was far different from my earlier experience with spiritualists.

There is power in belief. What we believe to be true will come to be true, and will remain true until there is association with new knowledge. Knowledge has a contagious quality, particularly knowledge that comes to us from psychic sources. It seems the more we know the more questions we have, and the more we want to know. The desire for psychic knowledge begins as a curiosity, and usually has its roots in the physical aspects of our being. We often reach out to others for psychic information, or experiment with psychic systems or tools such as tarot or astrology. Our agenda concerns our personal well being. Are we safe? What will happen next? When will I meet the man/woman of my dreams? The answers that come to us, whether from another person or from within, will manifest if we desire and believe them.

The intention of psychic experience is twofold. We never loose sight of our interest in self, as we are an expression of individuality in the physical world. Consequently, one intention is to provide us with options to fulfill our destiny based upon the karma we have created. This intention brings us the gift of possibility that is within our personal range of free will, and limited only by the power of our desire, imagination and belief. Another intention of psychic experience is to impart knowledge.

Over time our psychic inquiries become more profound. We may question why we feel that we have been to a place we have never been, or why someone we do not know well seems familiar, or why we sense a presence of someone close to us who has passed away. Our inquiries begin to extend beyond self, our agenda becomes more concerned with questioning the nature of being and cosmic law rather than the welfare of ourselves and those close to us.

Psychic experience is collective. It exists for us within an illusion of time and space, when in actuality there is no beginning and no end to the experience. To recall an experience is to invite new experience. A desire for knowledge is an invitation for further inquiry. In actuality there is no new knowledge and no new experience. The aspect of newness is an illusion, a by product of the reality we create in time and space. This is why psychic experience sometimes lingers in memory without meaning; it is awaiting an association with new experience and new knowledge.

The art of knowing is a life time event. Our assumptions and belief structure change as our range of acquired knowledge expands. A critical factor in understanding the nature of knowing is to understand that knowing is merely a nuance of truth. Two individuals can share knowledge and yet be in opposition about its meaning and what they believe. The opposition brings with it the opportunity for shared light, as well as the opportunity for war.

## MY EVOLVING CREED: KNOWLEDGE

1. I believe that knowledge comes to us from the physical as well as the psychic senses, and that mind and emotion, head and heart, must be in balance to obtain personal truth
2. I believe that intuitive experiences come to us from the cosmic as well as from astral and human sources, and that they may or may not bring truth
3. I believe that dreams are a source of truth and that dreams can be understood and interpreted as physiological truths, psychological truths, and spiritual truths
4. I believe that truth is reality based in the human realm of existence, and that what is true for one individual may not be true for another
5. I believe that empathy is an aspect of intuition and a method of communication, and that communicating in this way has greater depth and effectiveness than communicating with words
6. I believe that non truth is the opposite of truth, and that non truths are not intentional
7. I believe that the distinction between non truth and a lie is that a lie is intentional.

## Cluster 7:

### *Episodes of Communion*

## SUMMARY OF CLUSTER 7: EPISODES OF COMMUNION

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i remember the  
big surrender,  
the realization  
that  
i am not i  
and giving in to God

now there is  
another surrender  
that  
comes with the realization  
that the big surrender  
is a journey  
and on the  
journey  
are like souls  
and we  
surrender  
to each other  
as we evolve to the One



## AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

My heart was beating so fast I thought it would burst. I opened my eyes. I was in the middle of a very relaxing, peaceful dream when all of a sudden I remembered the dream before it. I could not remember any detail. All I could remember was that it was horribly frightening, and that I was very afraid. I wanted to return to the peaceful dream, but when I closed my eyes I was obsessed with thinking about the prior dream that was so frightening. What was it? Why can't I remember it? How did I transcend from a frightening dream to a peaceful and pleasant one so quickly?

I decided to slip into a meditation instead of trying to return to sleep. I imagined myself standing on a mountain in early morning. It was very cold and windy. I was barefoot and dressed in jeans and a t-shirt. I told myself I wasn't cold. I told myself that I was with God and that I was at peace. I nestled into a comfortable bed that I discovered at the tip of a cave on the face of the mountain. I took a deep breath, knowing I was with God and safe and comfortable, and looked out over the mountain.

"I have few questions," I said to the God within.

"You can ask," my self consciousness responded.

"Why does my consciousness bring me to dark places? That is my first question." I rolled on to one side and leaned on my hand. "How do I defend and protect myself? Is there a connection to service? How do I prevent myself from projecting to these places when it is not my intent?" I rolled back over and onto my back, placing my left hand over my heart and my right hand over my left. "Are my fears truly justified? Is there truly a caution here, or am I lost in the land of psycho babble?"

I slipped back in time to my early twenties when I moved into a house in New Canaan, Connecticut with a college friend. He grew up in the Bronx and was anxious to bring me to his old neighborhood. He lived in an apartment or dorm all his life and he missed the city. He insisted that his old neighborhood was very safe, and we visited one of his friends who still lived with his family in a huge high rise on a quiet and tree lined street.

The three of us decided to go into Manhattan for the evening, and my friend asked me if I was ok with the subway. I told him I had no problem with it, and then explained that I really didn't know the subway. I remembered my attitude. I was arrogant and courageous. There were several transfers to get into Manhattan, and I eagerly followed my two friends through the turnstiles and onto the platforms. They told me to stick close by. At one point they were a distance away, at the other end of the platform. This beautiful boy came from nowhere with two other kids that looked like thugs in leather jackets. The beautiful boy was of no identifiable race. His long straight hair was brown and silky. His eyes had an Asian slant. His caramel skin was smooth and adolescent. He could not have been more than fifteen. A switchblade popped from his closed fist and he fingered the tip with the fingers of his other hand. I slithered toward my friends on the other side of the platform without saying a word, and the three boys inched their way closer to me. I could see the train coming in one direction, and the penetrating eyes of these boys in the other direction. I refused to look into the penetrating eyes. In an instant the train stopped and I seemed to fall into it. Suddenly the boys were gone.

"As above, so below."

i met the priest  
in the parking lot  
beside the old confessional  
parked on the pavement in the open sun

i handed him a ticket  
and he watched me as i  
opened the door and knelt  
in reverence to the  
open sky

he smiled  
when i began  
my prayer of realization  
then he  
punched the ticket  
and handed it back to me

in my prayer  
i traded in the concept of  
worthiness  
for a semi scientific preparedness  
and an aura of  
chemical readiness  
enveloped me

the priest, he took off his collar and smiled

a pureness of mind  
and a balance  
of head and heart  
has become a sincere desire

friday fingers  
of a little boy  
hiding, playing  
behind the big old stove

memory  
then and now  
like streams of consciousness  
flowing into a pool of what was and what will be

fingers playing behind the stove,  
these fingers,  
i have this kind now

and the sound  
of the  
word  
Friday  
brings with it  
a symbol of a circle  
that is half black and half white

teleological me  
sits back  
and invents purpose

some little boy  
inside me asked  
if i'd ever been mad  
at God

*i said yes*  
he asked me  
what i thought  
dead  
was like

*i said sleeping*  
he asked  
if God could die  
then  
he asked if God  
was inside him

*i nodded silently,  
i asked him  
what he was afraid of*

he said his biggest fear  
was becoming nothing  
then  
he changed  
his mind

and said  
it was becoming too much

## WHICH ONE AM I?

It was back in the late eighties and I don't remember their names. I was running diversity workshops then so I was in tune with diversity issues. Sometimes in my memory I label us as two white men and a black woman. Sometimes I label us a gay and two straights. It's odd but no matter how the labels fall there is always two and one. The ultimate reality, however, is that we are three.

I did a lot of purging before I participated in the ritual. It was back then that I awoke in the middle of the night, not sure of my identity, wrestling with the feelings of obesity and being in someone else's clothes. I was shaking when I got out of bed. I didn't know who or where I was. I remember sitting on the couch with a glass of brandy, using all my rational power to regain my personality, my identity, the true essence of who I was. It didn't make sense. I am not fat. I never raped a woman. I don't have clothes like that. Yet no matter how much I tried to be rational, I could not escape the feelings of guilt. As I sat there with that glass of brandy I could feel the woman breathing beneath me. I could feel her last breath. I could feel her life force move through me.

And I can feel it now.

It didn't take long for me to conclude that this experience was not me, at least not me now. Still, the rational part of me scrubbed my consciousness for possibilities in search of an explanation. Was it me in a past life? Was it me tuning in with someone else? Was it me tricking myself into false belief based upon a subconscious association with a movie or book or someone else's experience?

I never came to a rational conclusion. I still can't. The best I can do is eliminate possibilities. Even so, I change my mind.

The conclusion I did come to at the time was that I am worthy of continuing my spiritual study, and that I am worthy of continuing on the spiritual path. Whatever happened, it was not me now.

The ritual was in two parts. I do not recollect the details of the ritual, and in an odd way they are not important. The important part was the two people I met and have never seen again. During parts of the ritual we were one. Our personalities blended and there was a wonderful sense of camaraderie, of peace.

There were times, however, when each of us pulled back. I remember the feelings of arrogance, of needing to be separate. Yet at the same time there was a divine curiosity, a love that melted our differences.

I didn't physically meet them until after the first part of the ritual. I remember moving with a crowd in a semi conscious state and nearly falling out a back door and onto a street in Greenwich Village. The cold air brought me back to an awareness of my physical state. The three of us stood there motionless on the sidewalk, blinking and staring at one another in silence. The crowd quickly dissipated as we marched down the sidewalk, and suddenly all three of us were talking at the same time. The talking soon broke into laughter and we found ourselves sitting in a restaurant and ordering lunch. There was a lot of "me too" and guffawing as we shared our stories, laughed, and talked over one another. It is amazing us how much we had in common. Our spiritual inquiries and journeys were similar. We shared the same heroes. All three of us had a common educational experience and did the same type of work, to the point where we each did the same certification work and were in similar middle management positions.

There was a push and pull about us. We didn't want to stay together for the afternoon even though there was a calling to do so. After lunch we walked around and continued to share. Parts of the sharing were uncomfortable and we each pulled back. The other man went to his office uptown. The woman went shopping. I wandered around the village in a daze. Before we knew it we were back together and participating in part two of the ritual.

Again, I remember nothing of the content of the ritual. All I remember was sharing the essence of who I was, and sharing the essence of who these two other people were. There was great comfort in this communion, but after the event there was an uncomfortable feeling and a need to pull back.

I could feel him feeling that he was not a gay man. I could feel myself feeling that I was not a father and had no concern for providing for a family. I could feel myself feeling that I was not singing in a black church. I could feel myself feeling that all needy black people are sucking on my success. I could feel her feeling that she was not white bread.

Not me. Not me. It's not me. I know who I am.

He was short. She and I were tall. He and I were white. She was black. He and I were men. She was a woman. He and I lived in Westchester. She lived in Brooklyn. He was main stream white bread majority. She and I were minorities.

We were each on a spiritual path, and at the same point in our understanding.

I can still feel myself standing with them in the crowded room, leaning against folding chairs, the pot luck aromas creeping into my nostrils as I politely chatted with the others in the room. And I remember wondering, sincerely, which one am I? And for the moment that I was not I, I was both threatened and elated at the same time.

I remember seeing my feelings in their faces and wearing the same expression back at them. I felt them pull back at the same time that I pulled back. It was too heavy, too confusing, too hard.

Now I sit back and reflect upon my lust for communion. It was like meeting someone and instantly wanting to become their best friend, to the point of wanting to become them. It was like the best sex, without even being physical, to the point of total harmony and integration.

What is it that I truly seek? How does what I seek compare to what I discover?

Why did we each choose to focus on our differences instead of our similarities?

What is it that I fear? What elements of that fear are justified? What can I control?

Why didn't I ask and write down their names? Why couldn't we become friends? Co-seekers on the path? Comrades? Business partners?

there i was  
on the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> street,  
and there i was again  
standing on the rotting peer  
over the dark Hudson

some trans man, then some lady  
threw me their delusions  
and i caught them in dream time

serious spacemen tingle on the lawn  
and then get back on their ships  
to continue their exploration of earth  
like excited, curious little boys

dreamtime, the power of mind  
imagination and association  
mixed with the  
known and the ever present unknown  
and the need to know

what is  
what isn't

there I was  
meditating in bed  
in some hotel near the Oakland bay bridge  
and a thought came from nowhere and assaulted me

"you live on a planet that eats the animals"

it was an 80's Winter  
when i first saw the Crazy Eddy Man  
standing  
with his hands in his pockets  
watching

the yuppies load their trunks with projection tv's and  
microwaves

i flew past on my bike  
and when i returned on my way home  
an essence slipped from me  
and we sat huddled by the shoe store  
drinking something hot  
from a styof foam cup

for a moment, just a moment, i was him as i flew by

it was an 80's Spring  
when i flew by him again on my bicycle  
and a surge of emotion rushed to my skull  
and beamed upward

the big belly was deflated and i could feel his hunger,  
his homelessness,  
the oily grime on his skin

an anger came at me  
and i was quickly evicted as i pedaled past

it was an 80's Summer  
when the Crazy Eddie Man  
wheeled his cart of bottles and rags  
to the no standing sign  
where i locked my bike  
and his sad eyes  
consumed me in a drunken stupor and quiet rage  
and i dismissed him and went on to shop

it was an 80's Fall  
and he stood by the curb  
near the pet store  
and his shirt was open and his t shirt was speckled with  
holes

i smiled from the inside  
and contemplated the possibility of spiritual donation  
as i pushed a smile of love toward him  
as i glided past

i was him again for a moment, hoping

naked  
spacemen  
genuflect  
at  
dawn  
in  
transparent  
costumes  
on  
Halloween  
night

invisible,  
we  
at  
times  
fly  
with  
them,  
become  
them

i  
close  
my  
eyes  
and  
see  
us  
clearly

then

lick  
a  
stamp

for  
the  
imaginary  
postcard  
in  
my  
head

spinning balls of light behind closed eyes  
produce an empty robe  
that flashes repeatedly before me

*open, closed, open*

some invisible ego animates the robe  
as it dances and spins in an illusion of separateness  
awaiting my surrender

the dancing and flashing  
announce significance to the left side of my brain  
and it visualizes a multiple choice exam  
while the right side of my brain comes to the realization  
that my ego  
is little more than a transaction  
in a grand cosmic process

the choices are not totally my own  
in terms of who and what the robe becomes,  
and yet we cannot decide

*open, closed, open, closed*

the robe is closed in a humble dance,  
arms wrapping it sides,  
then suddenly it opens slightly  
and breaks into a frenzied, lustful dance



in an instant it turns as though embarrassed,  
it stands silent  
and as i project thoughts of innocence  
it turns around, opens

*a memory of the Wizard of Oz springs into mind  
are you a good witch or a bad witch?*

*open, closed, open*

i make a quiet prayer to the God of my heart,  
my realization,  
and know it is time to surrender

*me the fool  
contemplating  
courage and surrender  
lying in a waterbed thirty years ago  
courageously projecting  
then enduring  
the biting souls,  
feeling stagnant in an astral cesspool*

*me the innocent  
without contemplation  
or conscious intention*

sick in bed,  
a ten year old boy  
out there floating in memory  
of bliss, of oneness with God,  
then crashing back into the body,  
and overwhelmed by  
overlapping rings  
of guilt and fear

*me the initiate  
contemplating  
courage, readiness and surrender*

initiation and after initiation  
swallowed by the cold,  
by the feeling of large and small,  
soft and hard,  
smooth and rough.  
ringing sound, intensive vibration  
and oh  
no  
not ready, not ready, not ready.  
not now

*me and not me  
observe the fool*

*in full circle*

hell  
is psychic noise  
and I hear it sometimes,  
hell is like a garbage hole  
of astral masks  
inhabited by the unihabited  
and spinning in space  
like a cesspool  
of screaming, cacophonous junk

me in teenage hangover  
soaring and sailing  
and searching for peace;  
me in mid 30's on vacation in St Croix  
asleep on the beach  
and in question of worthiness

they came at me,  
the ugly the pitful the crying faces  
and I asked why, why is there evil  
and I tried to send thoughts of love and peace  
but it was hard, too hard  
and I was scared, so scared so scared

and when it all stopped  
I was there, again,  
angry at God

where am I sleeping  
in a dreary hotel room,  
hanging in the astral like a part of the drapery  
and suddenly inspired  
by the thought

that people are not evil, it's their behavior that is evil.  
behavior changes, everything evolves  
and the collective we is never stagnant

in dreamtime i was a pirate

beside a half open chest  
and the chest burst fully open  
and spewed shiny objects that represented  
evil thoughts  
and  
intentions

as i gathered them  
i realized  
they were my thoughts,  
my intentions,  
my behavior in all time,  
now and not now.  
they were separate from me  
divorced, powerless

i retrieved them  
one by one  
and returned them to  
the chest,  
then closed the chest  
and pushed it  
into the deep blue sea

## A QUESTION OF WORTHINESS

I was in high school when I discovered the label 'astral projection'. Actually it wasn't my discovery, it was my friend who lived across the street. He baited me as we sat across from one another on the bed in his bedroom. I remember him getting up to close the door, and the crooked crucifix that hung on the wall opposite me. There was an aura of sacrilege in the room, but at the same time there was an intellectual curiosity that gave us permission to have the discussion. I told him about my studying the teachings of Plotinus, and he shared with me his discovery of this new concept called astral projection. "It's like totally real," I remember him declaring. "This isn't something that you or I made up, this is like something documented and that has been known for ages and ages."

I experimented with astral projection. I didn't realize that I was already doing it in my dreams. In my adolescent mind it was like a ghost of me traveling on some invisible ship through space and time. But there was no travel; most of the time I was bleeding spirit, an essence of me that hung close to my body. In my most successful attempts I just hung above myself, looking down.

Along with the teachings of Plotinus I was reading a book titled *The Marihuana Papers*. After studying the book I made a conscious decision to try pot. In my adolescent head I saw a connection between hallucinogenics and spiritual awareness. My friend across the street came to the same conclusion, along with a few friends from school. The pot was not very good. We tried and tried again, but no one got off.

I was also reading about hypnosis, and there was something in the process that was very familiar and very comfortable for me. In between our attempts to get high I tried hypnotizing each of my friends. I experimented with past life regression, and then one day decided to have a séance. Suddenly it became a weekend thing, a bunch of kids sitting around my room in the dark, waiting for some message from the beyond.

And there were messages. But what were they, truly?

One of my friends disappeared one night. No one could find him. It was pouring rain. He was suddenly in the circle, dry and frighteningly calm. He said he was with his grandmother. He told me that I was a fake. Then he told me that what I was doing was wrong.

All I did was project what came to me. It's not me. I didn't do it. I can't believe it. I can't not believe it. What am I, some kind of antenna with no will, no values, no power? You give me truth, you give me fantasy, you give me nightmares. And I play it back? That's it? That's all? I get to pick and choose what is valid and what is not?

No. I don't think so.

And then the marihuana worked all of a sudden. I was able to get high. I stopped with the seances and the hypnosis, but I did not stop with my personal inquiry. The combination of drugs and spiritual pursuit was horrific. I communed with the dark side.

Enough. It ended. Yet some of it lingered and lingers still.

And do you know what it is that lingers? Some of the unpleasant experiences, yes, but there is also a question of service. There are people with greater understanding than I, and there are people with less understanding than I. If the people with greater understanding are hesitant but willing to reach out to me, shouldn't I be willing to reach out to people who do not have the answers that I have?

My fear? They can eat me, swallow me, hurt me, bring me somewhere that I do not want to be.

And what have I learned over the years about the validity of this fear? One has to ask for service. One has to be a sincere seeker of light and remain focused. And that includes me. Whenever I've made contact and drifted, the contact ended. I need to model that behavior.

The other thing that I have learned about my fear is simply that my physical body and my environment need to be in harmony with my spiritual tensions.

If I am in harmony, if I precede meditation with a sincere incantation of cosmic alignment and protection, there is nothing to fear.

The question that remains is harmony. What is it? Is it behavioral? Emotional? Attitudinal? Chemical and related to diet? Physical and related to movement?

Yes, yes, yes. And the mix can vary from person to person.

It is a question of personal worthiness. And it is the self and the self alone that must answer this question.

It is also a question of intention. The passion and desire must be for light. The spiritual path is all about light. Acquiring light. Spreading light.

Fast forward at high speed through college and my early twenties. Through episodes of spiritual study, experiences with a spiritual church, and then nothing.

Nothing, nada, and then nothing followed by an invitation to join the Rosicrucian Order. And the limbo continued and continued, occasionally interrupted by invitations to commune.

Each invitation episode was the same. Complete relaxation. A coldness that came over my body. Swirling light and brightness that moved from my eyelids to the space above my eyes to the center of my head. And from the light came faces and heads that seemed to penetrate my consciousness. For the most part they were not human faces, at least not until they were up close. There was one that always came close. And the feeling was too close. And I could feel my identity blending. And then came the question. "Are you ready?"

I tried. I tried so hard. I tried to ignore and then calm the heart that was beating out of my chest. I tried to focus and think about love and become one with divine love. But I could not stay focused. I could not control my thoughts of fear. My doubt about the intention of these beings who were

invading self seemed to leak into the center of my head. I could not control it. No. I am not ready. Not ready. Not yet. Not now.

And then I would lie there, sad and disappointed in myself. I became analytical. I looked at the psychological angle of what was happening. Is my fear justified? What is really going on? Is this about courage? Is this about surrender?

Yes, yes. But courage and surrender have much in common with risk. Some risks have too many negative consequences and no matter how much courage I muster there is a high possibility that the outcome will not be in my favor. I learned to play with risk in my business environment. And I did well.

I analyzed the risks associated with surrender, and with being courageous. There were none. All I had to do was open my eyes.

When I look back in my journal I notice that these invitations for communion happened in clusters; in the early nineties, then the mid nineties, then the late nineties. In essence they were all the same experience, except for the feelings that came to me after I said no, not ready, not now. I went thru a cycle of feeling like a total coward, and then through questioning if I would ever be ready. Then I went through a period of acceptance, of realizing that when I was ready I was ready. And then I started to associate readiness with will and conscious intention.

In essence, I asked for a rain check. Yes, yes, but not now, not now.

I did experience gentle slices of communion over the past twenty years. Delicate blends of consciousness beyond self. It happened in Rosicrucian rituals and initiations. It happened in dreams. It even happened at work. I facilitated group think, building teams and working toward common goals. I even experienced it in the counseling world, allowing empathy to consume me to the point of understanding.

And now I am in limbo again, but it's a different limbo. It's a limbo of choice, and I am very close to cashing in that rain check.

There is a gestalt of now that is always with me. I remember my brief episodes of communion, but it is more than memory. It builds. I am more than I. I am not separate from the outer me, the earth and environment around me, the people around me. I am not separate from the inner me, my behavior, my dreams, my past or my future. I am both in control and out of control.

And what is it that I truly control? I control what I take into my physical body. I cannot control the consequences. I have limited control over my environment, of the energy I accumulate, dissipate and hold. Ultimately, all I control in the state of self are my inner and outer states of awareness.

And as my awareness expands, my capacity for readiness grows closer. Soon. Soon I will be worthy. Soon I will be ready.

i was in a white place  
drifting, floating  
and thoughts of you came to mind, but yet it wasn't  
the you i knew.  
suddenly i found myself in a dream within a dream  
struggling to wake up,  
calling to you, yet thinking i was calling someone else

one eye opened but i could not keep it open  
and a pulling came from the center of me,  
popping me back into dream time

it's January, that time again,  
and we are both back in that sterile room  
and you are thinking i betrayed you  
then abandon the thought and give yourself permission  
to die

we sat at the edge of  
the bed in the hospital and waited  
for the guerny to come,  
and you thought it was a limo  
and we were going away on vacation  
and i played along

bye, bye again

i pushed away the desire to visit you on the astral.  
no, no, it is not right,  
and yet in my subconscious  
uncontrollable states  
i screamed for you  
and screamed and screamed and screamed

and here i am in January again,  
still imagining myself talking with God  
and a host of beings.

asking them to be good to you  
pleading that you should get extra credit for being  
so good to me

i imagine your face  
and say thank you,  
thank you for twenty four years of peace and  
happiness.  
it was that contentment, that happy state that  
put me in a place of spiritual desire,  
and allowed me to pursue that desire.  
peace. be one with the cosmic Gerry and hold no  
earthly ties to me.

on the edge of the night  
leaning toward morning  
a red ball fell  
in the twilight of the beach  
and two dogs  
came out of nowhere  
to retrieve it

*remember us?*

memories blend  
like a menu  
and a subconscious me  
is responsible for selection  
and it has a leaning for the end,  
for sadness and separation

*and what of us now,  
is there now?*

death is not a barrier to now,  
being is ever evolving

*in the land beyond grief  
there is an ocean of choice  
and the subconscious leanings are washed away.*

*you evolve, we evolve.*

*people come in and out of your life,  
and when they come back in  
they have changed  
and you have changed*

so death is a false barrier

*as above, so below*

## A WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

“So what’s the deal with chakras?” The voice was clear but there was a haze over her face. “It’s all right,” she had a slight British accent. “You don’t remember which one I am, do you?” The face laughed and then continued. “I know, we all look alike to you.” There was a sarcastic smile and an exhale.

Her laugh was very familiar but I could not place it. We were standing at opposite ends of the labyrinth. I was already in the center and she was standing at the entry. “Oh,” I was embarrassed as there were several Indian faces that came from the haze. The voice, however, was quite distinct. “Ushakamarabien?” The sun was bright and all that was distinguishable about her face was her eyes.

“Wow,” her voice was suddenly American. “I’m impressed. You actually remembered my real name.” She walked forward on the path, her head bowed.

“Your story stayed with me,” I studied her movement. She was frail and her long black hair seemed to hang in front of her as she walked. I suddenly remembered her office and the scent of spice in the air, and I remembered sitting in the chair next to her desk and listening to her story. She was born in Africa and as a child traveled with a nomadic tribe. She was fostered by an English couple and lived for a time in London, and then was adopted by an American couple and spent her teenage years in Chicago and had the hardest time figuring out American culture. She made friends with an old wino in the street and her adopted parents grounded her for her own safety. She didn’t understand. Old people were wise. Why couldn’t she talk to the wise old man? Instead she stayed home and watched reruns of the Beverly Hillbillies and Bewitched.

“You know me as Sam.” Her head lifted and she stopped walking for a moment. “Call me Sam.” She put a hand by her forehead to block the sun as she looked at me. “That’s how you remember me.”

I suddenly had a flash of her paycheck and clearly saw the spelling of her real first name. I always felt guilty calling her Sam, but then again that was her way of fitting in. She never told me her real last name. The name printed on the check was her married name.

“So what’s the deal with chakra’s?” She asked again as she continued to walk toward me and then paused.

“As a westerner I just can’t relate to some of the concepts.” I studied her face and watched her head cock to one side. It took on an expression that I remembered from years ago, when she was sitting in my office and matter of factly explaining the concept of karma. There was an analogy about a knife slipping through a brick of cheese and the knife was her hand pounding firmly on the corner of my desk. “Well first it’s language. There are so many words and I can’t get their meaning’s straight.” I imitated her hand as the knife and sliced at my open palm. “Pingla, ida, you know those snakes winding their way around the base charka and slithering their way up the spine to the head with that sushumna pole thing stuck in the middle.”

“It’s not just a language thing,” she laughed and remained perfectly still on the path. “It’s as much a cultural thing too.”

“Yea,” I admitted with a nod. “Some of us don’t speak eighty eight languages.” I laughed. “Language comes so easily to you.” I suddenly remembered her story about the tribe she grew up with, about how their language was oral and not written and she would send tapes to an anthropologist friend who would meet with the tribe and play them. I remembered too when she went back to England for a weekend and came back with a thick British accent.

“Language did come very easily for me,” she nodded and continued walking on the circular path.

“It’s a visual thing too. I mean Eastern philosophy talks about charkas and breathe and all that as though it were a physical, matter of fact aspect of anatomy. When they do that I want to see it,” my eyes grew wide. “Visualize it, analyze it.” My hand became the knife again slicing at the invisible cheese. “And that whole deal about how many there are. Some



say 7. Some say 9. Some say 12. If it's so matter of fact, why don't we have an actual count?"

"Wait a minute," she put her hands on her hips and tilted her head in defense. "That's not an Eastern thing," she pursed her lips like an arrogant school teacher and then laughed. "Western culture," her face took on a serious tone. "Even the order," her head popped forward for emphasis. "Have contradictory statements about that."

"So what's the big deal?" I shrugged. "If the hypothalamus is a psychic center or not? It obviously has some psychic significance. Reminds me of the sainthood. You know, at one time this guy was a saint and now they have changed the criteria and the church says he isn't anymore."

Sam burst out laughing and swayed to one side as she covered her mouth with her hand. Her expression reminded me of the day I brought the application into her office and asked for her membership number. I wouldn't say she talked me into joining the Rosicrucian order, it was more that she made me feel like I was already one of them, that I belonged. She performed her hand over mouth expression in disbelief, then did her sway and funny laugh. She composed herself and studied me. "So what's your understanding? You always preferred your own models, so create your own model and go there."

I got lost in her eyes and found myself back at the time when we were working together. I had just been promoted to Financial Operations Analyst. The title made me weak in the knees because I had no financial background. I had been a Training Specialist, like Sam, and was working with her to implement a suggestion that I had to increase revenue by streamlining a billing process. It was a multi million dollar idea and the company bought it, but I was out of my league with the accountants. They made me show it all on a spreadsheet, but having no accounting background I couldn't make it balance. They would not help me. They kidded me by asking if they could sharpen my pencil. I went to Sam in a panic, and in her calm way she told me that my idea was a good one and it would work. She inspired me. She believed in me. It was then that I learned about alliances, and Sam

worked with me to get an accountant on our team. What I was really doing was organization development work, but I didn't know what that was back then. Soon I would. Soon I would be adopted by Human Resources and my real career would begin.

"Huh?" I gave her a stupid look as I had totally forgotten where we were and what we were talking about.

Sam gave me an understanding look and broke the tension by laughing. "I remember those guys talking about financial modeling and you joking in the cafeteria. Give me a three, give me a seven." The laughing subsided and there was silence. "Seriously. You always had to create your own model, create your own context of understanding, so give yourself permission to do that by spinning your own tale about Chakra's and psychic centers."

She continued walking on the path and in a short time we were both standing in the center of the labyrinth. The sun was beginning to set and Sam settled on the ground in a yoga position. I followed her lead and sat in a yoga position opposite her. Her eyes were closed and her hand motions signaled that I should spin the tale and create my own model.

"Well to begin," I took a deep breath and exhaled. "I prefer to think of the psychic centers as being located in five areas of the body. Each of these locations contains two or more centers. They might be organs, glands or an energy plexus. The locations in the body are the groin, mid section, chest, throat and head. These energy centers are part of the psychic body. They are responsible for all our involuntary functions, such as breathing and blood circulation. Each center also holds energy and is linked to emotion. These energy centers are influenced by our physical environment as well as by other people."

Sam smiled and closed her eyes, inviting me to talk further.

I closed my eyes and continued my explanation. "I'd like to talk about some experiments that I have been conducting. What I do is create an imaginary ball of light to travel the centers. I start with the centers in the groin. I focus on specific colors and sounds, then move on to invocations about that

particular center. I then move to the next location in the body, and when I have done them all I allow the ball of light to drift freely from center to center. Inevitably, it lands on a center where I have some issues. I spend a little time on healing, on divine love, and let the ball of light continue to float until it has no desire. At that point I bring it back down to the groin and visualize it spinning. As it spins it begins to travel through my body and then releases from the top of my head.”

“Do you know what you are describing?”

“It is Kundalini rising, if you care to think of it that way.”

“Is your intention to project consciousness?” Sam took a deep breath and exhaled.

“It is,” I opened my eyes slightly and then closed them again. “But the intention is not to project it on the earth plane. There is no earthly place or time that I desire to project to, at least not at this point.”

“Hmm,” Sam took another deep breath and exhaled. “And what have you learned about projecting consciousness to another plane?”

“That another plane is not a place, it has no physical constraints and no limits of time and space. Ironically, I need to invent or imagine a place and project myself to it. I project myself to a personal sanctum that I imagine in the astral. It is there that I invite experience beyond self. It is here where I may experience communion with other beings, obtain new knowledge, or just associate and experience truth in a different way.”

“So you have the details of this personal sanctum in place before you visualize the ball of light moving through the psychic centers.”

“Oh yes, and it has an emotional component to it as well. When I think of happiness, contentment and peace my mind automatically creates a visual. It’s like having a picture come to mind when a particular word or phrase is spoken. Except it is much more than a still picture. I project myself

to a place in the picture, almost as though I were projecting myself to a particular place in a video. The place I project to in the video varies from time to time.”

Sam made a funny yet quiet laugh, just as she had when she anticipated a business problem that I had not considered. I partially opened one eye and watched as she partially opened and then closed one eye. “Any surprises?” Her head tilted.

“As a matter of fact yes.” My eye closed automatically, as though I had been caught doing something that I should not have done. “There are elements of this vision, this place, that I did not consciously create. They come from emotional memories that I think are a combination of this life as well as previous lives.”

“What are they?”

“Well there are elements of a Rosicrucian egregore that I understand, but there are also images and feelings of being in a church. It’s like there is a Catholic or Christian part of me that uncontrollably comes forward.”

“And that bothers you?”

“It startles me.”

“I do that.” Sam disclosed and then was silent for a moment. “There are parts of me that I have forgotten, but on a subconscious level I associate them with a spiritual truth.” A quiet laugh was followed by silence. “Then I realized, if it’s about love and peace, why fight it?” Again there was silence. “Let it be.”

“I am working on that.” I nodded. “So after I have moved through all the psychic centers I bring my consciousness all the way down to the bottom of my spine and then imagine the ball of light racing through all the psychic centers and releasing from the top of my head. When the ball of light is released, I am in my personal sanctum. It is there where I am startled by visual images, artifacts of earlier experiences of cosmic truth and oneness.”

“And the artifacts distract you,” Sam said and paused. “I know, because I do the same thing.” She was silent a moment. “Do you always bring your consciousness down to that root psychic center?”

“Hmm,” I nodded. “Funny you should ask. I don’t always do that.” I was silent a moment. “I sometimes feel like I should, but I don’t. I don’t meditate like most people. It started when I took that last position at PB. I was so busy and there was so much going on in my life. Even though there was so much happening and I was so tired I could not sleep. I had so much on my mind that I would wake up in the middle of the night and suddenly remember all the things I forgot to do.”

“You let it burn you,” I imagined Sam’s head slowly swinging to and fro. “Oh I am so sorry,” I could feel her praying.

“It did burn me, but it also taught me control. I would get up in the middle of the night and very quickly make a to do list. Then I would get back into bed, but instead of trying to sleep I brought myself into a meditation. I soon realized that the meditation was as beneficial to my body as sleep, if not more beneficial.” I paused and felt the urge to open my eyes. “I still meditate that way.” I opened my eyes and saw that Sam had opened her eyes as well. “It doesn’t always work, I mean I am not always successful at meditating when I wake up in the middle of the night.”

“As I have gotten older I realized that I don’t need as much sleep.” Sam stood up and stretched, then slowly began the journey out of the labyrinth. “So when you are successful, do you start down in that root psychic center?”

“I do, but I don’t always want to. Do you do something similar? What do you do?”

Sam was suddenly near the end of the path. “I focus my consciousness on my heart or my head, and then move it to the upper portion of my chest.” She paused and turned to look at me. “Then I just let go.”

“Thank you,” I nodded.

“Sometimes it just isn’t worth it to go through all the centers. It just stirs things up. If you are already at peace why not start at the gateway to the higher centers, or just imagine that ball of light in the center of your head?”

“Yeah.” I nodded and waved at Sam, then closed my eyes and focused consciousness on my heart, then my head, then my heart again. I drifted for some time with the imaginary ball of light, then released consciousness from the center of my chest to my personal sanctum in the astral.

## ESSAY: IMAGINATION & PSYCHIC CENTERS

There are a number of energy centers that reside in different locations in the body. Different authors and esoteric groups disagree on the number of systems, where they are located, and what they are called. Some claim that there are seven centers located in three areas of the body, others declare that there are nine and some say there are twelve.

Language is a particular challenge when trying to understand the nature and attributes of the energy centers in the body. Is a chakra the same thing as a psychic center? Is there a difference between a psychic center and a gland? Can an organ such as the heart be one of these energy centers? Can an energy center be located in both an organ and a gland?

Yes, yes and yes – depending upon one's context and how their words are used.

Energy centers are a not part of physical anatomy, and that is why two schools of thought may be in agreement that there are seven centers, and yet be in disagreement about where they are located and the attributes associated with them. The simple fact about psychic centers is that you cannot dissect the body and locate them; they do not exist in that realm. An approach to consider when navigating the concept of energy centers is to consider the bigger picture, rather than ride the minutia of detail. It is of greater benefit, for example, to understand that there are a number of psychic centers located in the head that have a purpose in higher consciousness, then to obsess and get lost in detail. Let imagination be a gift of inspiration when working with the energy centers. If imagination takes you to the center of the heart as an energy center, or the throat or stomach, give yourself permission to experience and understand it.

The same is true for the attributes of the centers. In addition to a specific location, each center has a specific function as well as color and sound. Again, these attributes do not exist in the physical world. There are colors we cannot see and sounds we cannot hear. What we experience psychically is a nuance of understanding, and these nuances have their orientation

in self and the physical senses. Each sound and color has a spectrum, the extremes of which are comprehensible only by personal association and interpretation. What one may experience as green may be blue to another. Give yourself permission to imagine the sound of color, the color of sound. Give yourself permission to experience color and sound that is beyond the capability of your physical senses.

Below is a personal understanding of the energy centers. Let the chart be a template, and edit as needed.

## TEMPLATE CHART OF PSYCHIC CENTERS

Location	Organ, Gland or Plexus	Association	Meditation
Groin <i>Red, O, Earth</i>	Base of Spine, Root connection to physical plane	Safety, survival, groundedness, nourishment, physical health	I am of the earth and I am grounded. I am safe. I am secure. I am new and courageous, and ready to release old habits that no longer serve me.
<i>Orange, 000, Water</i>	Testicles, Ovary	Creativity, sexuality, pleasure	I am in the flow of this life, and in harmony with the lives that came before even though I may not remember them. I am in tune with my creativity. I am able to surrender my fears.
Mid Section <i>Yellow Ab Fire</i>	Digestion system, Pancreas, Liver	Ego, will, self esteem, 'gut' emotion, personal power	I am strong and powerful. I am brave. I am worthy and my perspective is of value.
<i>Blue, Violet khei</i>	Adrenals	Transmits emotions and concentrated thoughts into mental and physical effects	I am at peace. My emotions are like a still pool of water, and they bring a calmness and harmony to the mid section of my body.

Chest <i>Green Ay, Air</i>	Heart, Pericardial sac	Higher emotions, empathy, compassion, love – inner and outer	I am open to giving and receiving love. I am to open to receiving and sharing happiness. I am the light within my soul.
<i>Ehm Bluegreen</i>	Thymus	Letting go of self, psychic projection	Light is greater than self and not limited by it. Time and space are illusions.
Throat <i>Blue EEE Ether, sound</i>	Thyroid Parathyroids	Self expression; changing thoughts into words, sounds into mental impressions; maintains harmony between nervous systems; body and spirit	I hear and listen to the voice of my soul. I am able and willing to speak my truth. I am flowing and in harmony with universal energy.
Head <i>Indigo Om Light Violet or White Silence Thought, Energy</i>	Third Eye  Pineal, Pituitary, Hypothalamus	Psychic insight, intuition Transfers intelligence from psychic consciousness to objective	I am one with the cosmic. I am open to cosmic inspiration and psychic perception. I am at peace. I am wise and empowered. I am more than this body and mind.

## EXPERIMENT: PSYCHIC CENTER MEDITATIONS

### Meditation 1: Start, Stop, Continue

Begin with the psychic centers in the area of the groin. Visualize a ball of white light at the base of your spine. See it spinning. As it spins, become one with it and see the ball of white light begin to transform to *red*. Chant the vowel 'O' as you visualize this center. Know that this center is your connectedness to the earth. It is about being grounded and safe. Make the following invocation: *I am of the earth and I am grounded. I am safe. I am secure. I am new and courageous, and ready to release old habits that no longer serve me.*

Imagine the ball of light transitioning again to white, and with it move your consciousness to your genitals. See the ball of white light spinning. As it spins, become one with it and see the ball of white light begin to transform to *orange*. Chant the vowel 'OOO' as you visualize this center. Know that this center is about pleasure, sexuality and creativity. It is where pleasure and creativity flow like water. Make the following invocation: *I am in the flow of this life, and in harmony with the lives that came before even though I may not remember them. I am in tune with my creativity. I am able to surrender my fears.*

Imagine the ball of light transitioning again to white, and with it move your consciousness to the mid section of your body. See the ball of white light spinning. As it spins, become one with it and see the ball of white light begin to transform to *yellow*. Chant the vowel 'Ab' as you visualize this center. See the color yellow radiating over the mid section of your body. Feel its brilliance penetrating your belly and stomach. Know that this center is about ego, will, and self esteem. It is the seat of your personal power. It is where gut emotion churns with a fiery spark of desire. Make the following invocation: *I am strong and powerful. I am brave. I am worthy and my perspective is of value.*

Imagine the ball of light transitioning again to white. See it spinning through your digestive system, including the pancreas, liver, kidneys and adrenals. As it spins, become one with this white light and with the power of your imagination transform it to a *blue-violet*. Chant the vowel 'Khei'

as you visualize this center. Feel the cooling blue-violet as it swirls in this section of your body. Know that this center is where toxins and poisons are processed through the body. This is also the place where emotions and concentrated thoughts are transformed into mental and physical effects. See the blue violet color permeating this section of the body. Imagine this color as the blue violet of a flame. Make the following invocation: *I am at peace. My emotions are like a still pool of water, and they bring a calmness and harmony to the mid section of my body. I am at peace.*

Imagine the ball of light transitioning again to white, and with it move your consciousness to your heart. See the ball of white light spinning through this area of the chest. As it spins, become one with this white light and with the power of your imagination transform it to green. Chant the vowel 'AY' as you visualize this center. Feel the color green as it swirls about in your chest. Allow the green to penetrate your heart, moving deep within it to the pericardial sac. Visualize your very being, your soul, residing in this sac. Know that this center is the gateway to the higher psychic centers. It is the home of the higher emotions, of love, empathy and compassion. As you visualize the color green in the area of the heart, allow your consciousness to transcend self. Take a deep breath and imagine the flow of air bringing your heart the love and compassion of the universe. Make the following invocation: *I am open to giving and receiving love. I am to open to receiving and sharing happiness. I am the light within my soul.*

Imagine the ball of light transitioning again to white, and with it move your consciousness to a place just above the heart. See the ball of white light spinning through this area of the chest, the area of the Thymus. As it spins, become one with this white light and with the power of your imagination transform it to a *blue green*. Chant the vowel 'Ebm' as you visualize this center. Feel the *blue green* color as it swirls about in your chest. Know that this center is about letting go of self; it is about the search for greater light. It is about psychic projection. Make the following invocation: *Light is greater than self and not limited by it. Time and space are illusions.*

Imagine the ball of light transitioning again to white, and with it move your consciousness to the throat. As it spins, become one with this white light and with the power of your imagination transform it to *blue*. Chant the vowel 'EEE' as you visualize this center and imagine the vibratory sound



coming from this vowel bringing truth to your throat center. Know that this center is about self expression. It is about transforming thought and experience into words, and transforming sound into mental impressions. It is about speaking and experiencing your truth. This center maintains harmony between the autonomic and spinal nervous systems, maintaining harmony between body and soul. Make the following invocation: **I hear and listen to the voice of my soul. I am able and willing to speak my truth. I am flowing and in harmony with universal energy.**

Imagine the ball of light transitioning again to white, and with it move your consciousness to the center of your forehead. See the ball of white light spinning between your eyes. As it spins, become one with this white light and with the power of your imagination transform it to **indigo** and chant the vowel '**OM**'. Know that this center is about psychic perception. Just as there are physical senses such as sight and sound, there are psychic senses as well. Make the following invocation: **I am one with the cosmic. I am open to cosmic inspiration and psychic perception.**

Imagine the ball of light transitioning again to white, and with it move your consciousness to the center of your head. See the ball of white light spinning between your eyes. As it spins, become one with this white light and again chant the vowel '**OM**' as you visualize this center. Know that this center is about transferring psychic experience to objective consciousness. It is about integration of experience, about what we integrate into self. As you focus your attention on the middle of your head, visualizing pure white, make the following invocation: **I am at peace. I am wise and empowered. I am more than this body and mind.**

Remain relaxed and breathe normally. Allow the ball of white light to float back down to the groin, and then let it drift upward to any center that may be calling for attention. Remain open as the light lands on a particular center. Open yourself to release any energy or feeling that is no longer serving you. Continue to allow yourself to float until all emotion is like a still pool, and you are in harmony with self.

Journal: Where did the ball of light focus? What happened? What does the experience mean? Is there anything I need to start doing, stop doing, or continue to do?

## Meditation 2: Letting Go of Self

Repeat meditation 1. When you find yourself in harmony, bring the ball of light back down to the groin. Imagine it spinning. See it spinning faster and faster, becoming brighter and more intense as it spins. Visualize it moving from the groin to the mid section of the body, and then to the heart and throat. Chant the vowel '**Ehm**' three times and then imagine it moving to the middle of your head and bursting through the top of it. Remain open and allow your consciousness to blend with consciousness beyond self.

When you are ready, bring your consciousness to the area the digestive system, particularly those glands that filter and purify. In this area are the adrenals. The adrenals transmit emotions and thoughts into mental and physical effects. Focus on a blue-violet color, and chant the vowel '**khe'i**'. What are you feeling about this recent experience? What does your rational mind tell you about it? How might this experience alter your self perceptions?

Journal: What does your heart tell you about the experience? What does your head tell you? How has it changed your awareness?

## Meditation 3: Personal Sanctum

Same as meditation 2, except project your consciousness to a personal sanctum. A place that you have created, which exists in the astral. Begin with an invocation that brings you to a place of love, and ask for God's love and protection as you project your consciousness to this special place.

## Meditation 4: From the Heart

Same as meditation 1, but begin with the heart center. This is a much quicker approach, and is appropriate when the body is completely rested and at peace. It is a good approach to use in between periods of sleep, when you are awakened by a dream.



## MY EVOLVING CREED: COMMUNION

1. I believe that spiritual desire is greater than physical desire, and that this desire inspires and promotes spiritual development
2. I believe that states of communion are the next level of human consciousness, and that as we evolve as spiritual beings our attributes of self consciousness will devolve
3. I believe that communion requires a surrender of self
4. I believe that communion with other souls is an aspect of evolving to One
5. I believe that empathy is intuitive communication, and that the ultimate empathic experience is communion
6. I believe there are levels of empathic communication, and that this communication is not limited to those on the physical plane
7. I believe that spiritual development, particularly at the stage of communion, requires a harmony of the physical body, environment, and spiritual intention

Cluster 8:

*Choices*

## SUMMARY OF CLUSTER 8: CHOICES

### *It's Just Not Right* 389

A memory of a childhood dream about stealing candy from a drugstore prompts a reflection about what our behavioral choices in dream tell us about our aspirations, and how we may have to change our behavior to attain our desire.

### *Fortune Tellers of Hooterville* 392

A reflection about a move to a rural western town prompts a dialogue about spiritual choices, and their relationship to our behavior and personal values.

### *Fast Track to Destiny* 402

A discussion with a trusted colleague about the relationship between free will, destiny and fate lead to a dialogue about the life script that we each create between lives to address our needs and desires. Also discussed is the range of free will and behavioral choice associated with the destinies in our life script. A method of using the imagination to solicit feedback from mentors about future behavioral choices in the areas of career, relationships and psychic development is created and tested.

### *Experiment: Asking for Feedback* 412

Suggested questions to inspire feedback from within about psychic development, and about personal destiny and its relationship to behavioral choice.

### *Cigarettes and Fried Chicken* 414

A recollection of cigarette addiction and fast foods create a dream about controlling desire. A dialogue with an obese woman about the consequences of choice leads to an idea that if desire can be controlled in dreams, it will be easier to control when consciousness returns to the waking state.

### *Round Trip Ticket* 419

A mentally ill client becomes a high functioning adult in a dream. His therapist experiences flashes of the client's mental state, and suggests

approaches to help him cope. Thought and shared identity are discussed as a treatment option.

*Essay: Behavioral Best Choices* 432

The concepts of destiny and desire and their relationship to behavioral choice are discussed, along with the options and consequences of planned versus reactionary behavioral response. Psychic development is presented as a spiritual desire that is supported and enhanced by specific behaviors.

*Experiment: Changing Behavior & Making Things Happen* 434

Using reflection techniques to identify conflicts between destiny, desire and behavior. Reflection questions are also provided to initiate changes in behavior.

*My Evolving Creed: Behavior* 435

A list of relative, personal truths about behavior.

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what  
a  
peculiar  
dream

the thief  
snatched  
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wallet  
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## IT'S JUST NOT RIGHT

It's lunch time at Belltown School and I am standing in front of the candy counter at Jack's Pharmacy. Licorice, bubble gum and lick 'um aid stare me in the eye. A thin young man with dark hair is in the back of the store, far from the cash register or the counter. He is not tall like Jack. He is young, aloof, smart and articulate. He is in the middle of a debate with an older kid about the crisis in Cuba, about democracy versus communism. He had been on a scholarship program at some famous college and was studying Physics, but decided that college was a waste of time. I stand there patiently, waiting for him to come to the register so I can pay for my candy and go back to school. The talking gets louder. I can hear the first bell in the school yard. Lunch is almost over. I shuffle back and forth and clear my throat to make a little noise. Suddenly a beatnik head appears at the end of the long dark aisle.

"It's all right," the head said. "Leave the money on the counter and take the change you need."

The head backed into a hole behind one of the shelves in the back of the pharmacy. I fiddled with the coins in my pocket. I was annoyed. I was afraid to touch the money on the counter, and then it occurred to me that I didn't have to leave the right change. In fact, I didn't have to leave any change at all. I swallowed hard. I was angry. I might be late. In a flash I plopped a quarter on the cash register, took a dime, and grabbed a fist full of candy.

No one knew I stole it.

I stuffed my face with candy until my jaws were tired of chewing. After school I gave some away to kids in the playground. It didn't taste as good as I thought it would. It wasn't as good as when I paid for it. I talked to myself. I wondered if the devil made me do it. I decided there was nothing wrong with what I had done. The pharmacy deserved it. In situations like that it was ok to steal.

I didn't really believe that it was ok to steal, but I followed my creed and very time I went to the pharmacy and had to wait I stole some candy. After a few times the candy tasted just as good as if I had paid for it.

One morning as the light was streaming in my window a small voice clicked in my head and said that stealing wasn't right. I reasoned with the voice and explained that I wasn't really stealing. This was a special circumstance. I looked around the bedroom at the dark shadows. I thought about the morning my bicycle was missing. I remembered how I felt when I found out that it was stolen, that it wasn't mine anymore. That was real stealing. I would never steal anything that really belonged to someone else. It wasn't right.

I looked in the mirror that was directly in across from the bed and then quickly looked away. I told myself I should not feel guilty, but the feeling would not go away. I closed my eyes and rolled over and eventually fell asleep. In my dream Jack was handing me change for something that I was buying for my mother. An impatient woman stood next to me with a white bag in her hand and a crumbled receipt. The telephone rang. An excitement welled inside me as I watched Jack hand me several dollar bills and a handful of coins. I knew it was too much, but he was so busy and the lady was standing there and was all upset, so I thanked Jack with dancing eyes and quickly ran from the store. Each time I counted the money on the way home there seemed to be more, and all of a sudden I was rich. Pictures of all the things I could buy flashed through my head. Several times my vision was interrupted by impulses to turn around, walk back to the store and explain to Jack that he gave me too much change. The vision of what I could buy was stronger and my legs kept moving forward.

I woke up before I got home. A sadness settled in the pit of my stomach. I didn't have the money. I couldn't help but look into the mirror across from me. I was disappointed in myself. If I realized in the dream that I was only dreaming, I would have given the money back. I tried to fall asleep and return the money, but the dream would not return.

when i realized  
what i did  
i felt like  
a dog  
who peed on the rug

it  
wasn't because  
i was feeling guilty or sad  
it  
was because  
what  
i  
did  
interfered  
with  
who  
i  
wanted to become

## FORTUNE TELLERS OF HOOTERVILLE

I knew I moved to Hooterville when I had to go to someone's home to set up an account for water, but the reality didn't set in until a conversation took place with a group of boys on the dirt road in front of the house. "You lived in New York?" The young teens head twists to one side and then the other. "And you moved here?" His body lowers gracefully as though he were moving into a Tai Chi pose. "Why?" His small frame dances higher and his head swings in ying and yang. "Why?" His voice is high. "Why?" His voice is an even higher pitch.

Why? There were personal reasons involving a new relationship and testing a semi retired way of life, but from a spiritual perspective the reason was energy. The energy is very different in the west, due perhaps to a combination of landscape and people. Mountains, deserts and quick changes in altitude carry with them a boldness and a compelling need to express and protect one's individuality. The contrast of cactus, succulents, huge evergreens and the constantly changing color and hue of the mountains are themselves a testament to the expression of individuality. The essence of that individuality explodes in people. Rich, poor, republican, democrat, all seem to exude a cowboy mentality of self expression and protection. Even those who disagreed with my beliefs or way of life, respected my need for independence.

I conducted intakes for a human services agency and met a spectrum of people. I met a few new age types, but most were Christian types with redneck tendencies. The rednecks had the greatest need to protect themselves, and were quite open about it. I remember asking a woman during an interview if she had any guns, and she nodded nonchalantly that yes indeed she and her husband did have guns. Gospel rock and roll played in the background as I asked her how many guns she had and she said ten. I then asked her if they were secure. "All except the one I keep in the nightstand," her blond head tilted to one side and her eyelashes fluttered innocently. "A woman's got to protect herself."

I thought this unusual and went on and on about it in my written assessment. After numerous discussions with colleagues, and many more interviews,

I came to the realization that gun ownership was the norm. Nearly everyone except the new age types had at least one gun.

The new age people attribute the unique energy of the area to natural vortexes. Some imagine these vortex centers to have great power and influence over people. The rednecks think they are looney, and attribute the energy of the environment to the glory that is America. Flags abound in Hooterville. I found it to be true that different places exude different energy. There are places that bring about a masculine, warrior energy, and other locations that are more feminine and creative. Some new age types take it to the extreme. "You went where?" The self declared witch dropped her jaw and her eyes grew wide. "That mountain is so aggressive it throws people off!"

Maybe it does, or maybe there is some combination of attraction and inspiration that drives people to do and think unusual things. At least once a week there is an article about a hiker who fell to his death, or got lost in the mountains after sunset. You can purchase protection and prevention for all of this in uptown. You can get pictures of your aura, and buy crystals and other objects to carry on your journey. There are even psychics who claim they can clean and tune your charkas.

"How do you do that?" I imagine myself asking the Native American who identifies as Silver Cloud. He doesn't answer. Instead he slips into a trance and waves a feather over the front of my body. I am wondering if perhaps Silver Cloud is really Bernie Schwartz from Brooklyn.

"Oh." I was sitting by a lake and studying the reflection of Bernie in a dream.

"Life without an ocean is very different."

The reflection was silent for a moment, and then took on a sarcastic expression.

"Oh," I was the reflection and yet I was separate. "I feel like I am talking to myself."

“You are talking to the other side of self. I am just another character that you invited into dream. We are partners in dialogue. I become you and you become me to the degree that we allow communion. So you are right, within the delusion of self you are talking to yourself.” His voice dropped to a whisper. “I am not really Silver Cloud. I am only the Silver Cloud that you imagine me to be.”

“Well of course, the self is all I truly know in this consciousness.”

“Is it really?”

I studied the reflection and moved every which way. The reflection followed my lead and continued speaking. “Then don’t think of me as separate. Think of me as a cosmic echo that resonates in your consciousness.”

“So tell me echo, what is the opportunity in this separation?”

“Choices, behavior, it’s all about behavior.”

“You mean intentional behavior?”

“So you think circumstance, environment, just comes at you?”

“Of course it does. Perhaps there is some grand plan, and perhaps I even created it, but for the most part I move through this incarnation unaware.”

“Except when you sit back and truly reflect, then the opportunities rise to the surface of that self consciousness and the consequences of choice become very clear.”

“As I have gotten older that has become even more true. I am always contemplating the consequence of choice. There isn’t much spontaneity left.”

“And does that seem appropriate to you?”

“Choice is queer for the intentional virgin who has already lost virginity. We have all lost it. We are all becoming, transforming from religious compulsive to psychic obsessive.”

“You are wearing an expression of anger. Tell me about the anger.”

I looked up instead of into the river at Silver Cloud. “Well thought doesn’t always precede acting, at least not contemplative thought.”

“The flip side of visualization is desire.”

“Yes, the ‘B’ side.” I looked down at Silver Cloud and swung my head to and fro to make sure Silver Cloud was following my lead. “I don’t play the ‘B’ side as much as I use to.”

Bernie’s head followed my every move. “Desire makes you angry because it is often not rational. What have you learned about desire?”

“Desire propels destiny, and denial does not work. It’s the long and painful road of acquiring courage, basking in self talk and compromise, contemplating and making behavioral choices, and yes it all has to do with karma.”

“Then desire is opportunity, yes?”

“Yes. But there is need for control.”

“Hmm. If there is a need for control, then what do you think about a divine plan?”

“I think for the most part it’s a cop out. Of course there is a divine plan, but I am part of the divine and not separate from it. If I don’t take care of my body, my health for example, this incarnation will end much quicker.”

“Yes. But couldn’t that be part of the plan?”

“Only if that’s my choice.”



“There are no pronouns, just cosmic awareness in the transition from vestal to professional virgin.”

I leaned forward and then back, my reflection imitating my every move. I smiled, he smiled, and the reflection said. “This pronoun bleeds I am, I am the queerest brand. I, a puff of spirit, a slice of flesh, a thin veil flapping in between. How can this two spirit human, this animated soul, remember if it never forgot?” We sat in silence for a moment with our eyes closed. When I opened them Bernie laughed. “I know, you think you opened your eyes first.” He yawned. “How does becoming a psychic obsessive provide relief?”

“A religious compulsive positions himself above the self, above the world of the mundane. The same is true for the tribe of psychics, except we have a broader bandwidth. We are multi cultural, multi everything, and our religion has become contextual understanding that is perpetually changing and perpetually different from one to the other.”

Bernie’s reflection changed to one of the blonde women I interviewed. “Praise the Lord.”

“However,” I continued and pretended that nothing was different. “We routinely submit to ego. In a conscious state our understanding cannot exceed self. Ultimately, ego is divine intention. It was and is our destiny in each incarnation. Each of us has to account for the ego that has expressed itself in this hum drum, mundane world.”

“Halleluiah,” the blonde blinked and her eyes grew wide in imitation of me. “Ego is an expression of the Lord, and that expression is divine intention.” She stopped talking and I studied her as she mimicked my movement. “Tell me,” she said breaking the silence. “What do you suppose happens to the religious compulsive, the psychic obsessive, when they reach the other side?”

“It’s a flip flop. Here on earth we are consumed by spiritual pursuits, and on the other side we reflect upon our earthly behavior and invent behavioral opportunities for the future.”

“You mean you reflect upon who you played and how you were played, and how the drama will continue in another incarnation?” The blonde turned into Bernie.

“Precisely.”

“So help me understand the contradiction. What is going on here?” Bernie reminded me of a therapist I had seen years ago.

“The religious compulsive is afraid of sin and afraid of punishment. It gives him a context for controlling his behavior, and enables him to manifest a self discipline.”

“And the psychic obsessive?”

“He’s above it all. It’s like you said earlier, he lives in the belief that everything is in divine order so there is ultimately no value in planning and controlling behavior.”

“You don’t believe that.” Bernie looked me in the eye. “It’s not consistent with what you have been telling me.”

“No I don’t believe it.” I looked to the side and then up at the sky.

“And you do not identify as either the psychic obsessive or the religious compulsive.” There was silence for a moment and I resisted the urge to look him in the eye. “So what track are you on?”

“I am no different then the fortune tellers of Hotterville, the psychic obsessives who preach self invented new age truths. We become victims of our own visualizations, of the information and advice we give and take in.”

Bernie turned into the blonde. “And how different are you from the religious compulsive people who hunger for salvation and forgiveness? You are merely a perceptual being and you seek to share your perception.” The blonde turned back into Bernie. “Sharing perception is how we expand and

grow. The menu options are clear but sometimes they are not consciously selected. For lack of any better descriptors the options are higher, lower and same.”

“People with the same perceptual outlook are the most comfortable to be around, and of course that is my preference. They validate me, make me feel good. People with a higher, greater or more expansive perception than my own are my teachers.”

“And what of people with a lower, limited or just different perception?”

“Levels are not so easy to define. Within one personality there are many levels of understanding. We are all teachers and leaders, and we are all followers. It’s situational.” I leaned back so that I could not see the reflection.

“Words words words,” Bernie shook his head and it felt as though I were shaking my head in imitation of him. “I see you sitting with the pork boys and their French fried addictions.” There was silence for a moment. “I know you hear me. You can be the adulteress of denial if that is your wish, forgetting sometimes that you not only consume the consequence of what you eat, you become the company you keep!”

“Ok,” I looked down at the lake and nodded. “You got my attention.”

“Your destiny was to come to the west and further west you will go.” Bernie nodded and we both continued to nod as we rocked front to back. “You talk about the balance of head and heart. You have been in that place since you were nineteen. What about the sense of attraction and repulsion that resonates from your aura, your soul?”

“What about it?”

“How do you deal with repulsion?”

“Repulsion is a queer thing. There is a push and a pull at the same time; a feeling of wanting to run and hide and at the same time a desire to share and be involved.”

“Unlike like the fortune tellers of Hotterville, your struggle is about aligning values.”

“What do you mean?”

“You are struggling with choice. You like the company of the psychic compulsives, these fortune tellers of Hooterville. On a social level you resonate well with many of these people, and you enjoy the social interaction. However, from a values and behavioral perspective there is conflict.”

“So what does that mean? You are talking in riddles.” I leaned back from the lake and Silver Cloud stepped out from the woods behind me with a pipe.

“Take some of my holy medicine,” he lit the pipe and offered it to me.

“I don’t do substance.” I looked him square in the eye without blinking, and held my gaze.

Bernie’s face flushed red and I thought his head would blow off. “It is not substance,” he said vehemently. “It is holy. You do not understand.”

“I have no need to understand.”

Bernie turned into the blonde. “Conflict reaches a point where there is surrender or defeat.” A ripple in the lake gave her a more compassionate look. “The religious compulsives attract you too. Tell me, what is different in your attraction?”

“I can better maintain my values when in the company of the religious compulsives. I observe their behavior and for the most part have no desire to take part in it. I am objective.”

“Live your values. You are neither a religious compulsive nor a psychic obsessive. Give yourself a chance to become what you believe by making choices that are appropriate to your spiritual desire.”

“I feel like I am ascending and descending at the same time. I think it may be time to leave Hooterville. ”

my collective aura  
dances like a shadow  
in the backdrop of this present character, this me

in dream time  
i follow it like a shadow  
and i know that i am who i was who i am

no longer fifteen  
twenty two  
thirty five  
or fifty,  
yet i am.

i am my aura,  
an energetic collection of the choices I made,  
and i cannot tell then from now

in dream time I become  
the residual energy  
of my actions and interactions  
with *us* and *you* and *we* and *them*  
in the backdrop of this physical and metaphysical place

i become the shadow(s)  
and i am the light  
becoming, becoming  
shadows of *from* and *to* and *what is* and *what will be*

attract. repel – let it be let it be

head, heart and the radiations of aura

attract. repel – let it be let it be  
destiny  
like a night sky

filled with stars  
and darkness and light

*w as/is/will be*  
co-created  
by *me* and *you* and *us* and *them*

*and what about my destiny*  
*my journey, my fate*

you mapped it,  
you created it

*i can see fragments of the script*  
*like the first part of a movie,*  
*and when it plays in my dreams*  
*i witness the unplayed options*  
*and their consequences*

destiny always feels good,  
especially when it is instant,  
fate is taking the long way home,  
it isn't as pleasant

*the instant destinies sometimes*  
*don't play,*  
*it's choices and their fate*  
*that I rewind and re-play*

*you* and *me* and *us* and *we* are them  
like stars in the night sky,  
integrated members of  
the constellation,  
players and co-creators  
in the journey of light  
*the veil comes and goes*  
*i remember, and i forget*

## FAST TRACK TO DESTINY

I followed the dusty path to an old cave that reminded me of a friend's office many years back. Before the work day began I would find my way to her office with a cup of tea and we would sit and chat for fifteen or twenty minutes. The conversation would meander from very personal topics to issues with direct reports and on to the very hot political buttons on each of our projects. Our conversations were always peppered with 'don't tell anyone but..' and we both honored that confidentially, surprising people in our work environments with information that frequently no one else had.

To my surprise there was no one in the cave. It was early morning and I needed to escape from the intense Arizona sun. I settled into a corner with my bottle of water, then took off my sunglasses and had a drink. I stretched and leaned back further, then noticed something written above me. It was hard to read as some of the characters were faded or blurred. I reached up with my hand and with my forefinger drew a box around the word I could not decipher.

"What do you want it to say?" I could hear my colleague's voice.

"I have no expectation," I said rubbing a small stone on the surface of the earth.

"Pick up the rock," the voice instructed.

I did what she said and as I did so noticed that the box I drew around the word shifted.

"Get a feel for it," the voice continued. "Play with it and you will notice that you can change the resolution."

"Wow," my eyes grew wide as I studied what was now a screen above me. The word on the screen was very clear. It said 'Answers'. I clicked on the small stone as though it were a mouse and a new screen came into view. Again the words were blurry.

The female voice gave a friendly laugh and I imagined her with her hand over her mouth, as though she knew something but wasn't ready to tell me. "Use the stone," the voice said and then continued to chuckle. "There's no magic in the stone," she stopped laughing. "What the stone really does is to help you focus."

"There is a magic in the stone," I said to the imaginary voice. "It is one of peace. It let's things settle inside me."

"What is it you need to settle?"

I closed my eyes and opened them. Words and images danced on the screen above me in an attempt to form a question. The words were life script, free will, destiny and fate. The images were waves, shifting rocks and sand. Some of the images were water based and were like video bites of the ocean, and other images were earth based video bites of the desert. I could feel my whole body relax as my eyes roamed the screen and focused on the words 'free will'.

"You know what that is," the voice was direct and assertive. "No more mystery here."

A flow chart of empty boxes came up on the screen. Most of the boxes were rectangles. Some of the boxes were diamonds. I squinted to see if there were words in the boxes.

"Not yet," a playful laugh followed the voice. "Remember the diamonds are the decision points, the choices we make. Every box on this chart is connected if it gets filled in."

"What do you mean if it gets filled in?"

"Well there are options, but the options are not just thought based they are also behavior based."

"And the options have consequences."

“Absolutely.” The playful laugh continued. “And of course options produce more options and the chart becomes very complex.”

“And they can totally get you off track.”

“Oh yes.” The voice was suddenly very serious. “But that is not the intention, and help is available to keep you on track.”

I blinked and rubbed the stone and the previous screen came back up. The words ‘spirit guides’ were added to the mix of floating words and images.

I rubbed the stone again and the screen went blank, then an empty box appeared on the top left of the screen and then another empty box appeared in the lower right corner of the screen.

“The box in the upper left corner is destiny. The box in the lower right corner is fate. The space in between is the range of free will.”

“Define destiny and fate.”

“Destiny is the experience you want to have. Think of it as the product of need and desire. Fate is the outcome of destiny. You can think of it as karma.”

“Give me an example.”

“No you give me an example,” the voice said laughing. “Pick one element of your life that you feel was destined before you came into this incarnation.”

“Well one destiny was the gay experience. It was to live a joyous life of self acceptance, relationship and quiet influence.”

“You’ve lived a good portion of that life. There were options along the way. Tell me about one option.”

“Well the biggest option was how to pursue relationships and integrate the rest of my destinies.” I paused for a moment. “I believe that I have more

than one destiny in this life. Anyway the option I choose was to be in a long term, monogamous relationship, and to live that life without hiding.”

“And how would you describe the fate associated with that destiny?”

“There are many. The greatest has to do with the capacity for love. My experience taught me that I am worthy of love, and that I am capable of loving another. My fate is to love, be loved, and be accepted. Another fate involved a quiet influence on non gay folk and their attitude toward homosexuality. ”

“You took the fast track to that destiny.”

“Wish I could fast track the rest,” I played with the stone in my hand and a cursor sailed over the words and images on the screen above me. I tried clicking on ‘life script’ and was excited when the flow chart of boxes returned with most of the words filled in. I sat up and stared more intently at the screen above so that I could read through the boxes. I read through the relationship boxes and then came to an empty decision box with a series of boxes after it. “I guess I spoke to soon on that one. I’m not done yet,” I shook my head and waited for a reaction to my body language but was greeted only by silence. “A peaceful, loving relationship is what helped me pursue the rest of my destinies. It lasted 23 years. I have been blessed with a new relationship and it is going well. We have traveled the same road from a spiritual perspective, in terms of study, but have lived very different lives.” I fingered the stone again and an image of a cross with a rose in the center filled the screen. “I wonder how the future will play out in terms of service and our individual psychic development.” The flow chart of empty boxes returned to the screen. “We both have a sense that there is a reason we are together.”

“You pulled him into your life, didn’t you?”

“Oh yes, there were many visualizations before we actually met.” I paused in thought for a moment. “Actually, we had met once about ten years ago. He was a facilitating a workshop on Tarot.”

“Maybe you need to think back about the intentions of those visualizations,” she paused with a shrug and then a yawn. “Or change them.”

There was silence for a few moments and I expected more on this topic but it did not come. I sat in silence and was feeling uncomfortable.

“You were hoping the boxes would be filled in,” The voice laughed softly. “It doesn’t work that way. The only part of your script that you can see is what has already happened.”

“I figured that would be the case,” I scratched my head. “The hard part about moving toward your destinies is the silence.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, one clear learning for me in my career was the value of feedback, both as a leader and as a worker. As a worker it was always inspiring to hear that you were on track, that you were doing well, and that sometimes you were even exceeding what was expected of you. It’s not that I didn’t receive negative feedback, I had my share of that, but when feedback is timely and presented in a way that is about opportunity it makes all the difference.” I looked up and pointed at the filled in boxes. “The silence is difficult. I mean, I would like to take the fast track to every destiny if I could.”

“It isn’t about fast, it’s about learning.”

“So I guess it isn’t about right and wrong,” I could feel myself smirk as I imagined my colleague shaking her head. “Or about positive and negative.”

“No,” the voice hesitated. “That’s not totally true. Behavior can be positive or negative.”

“And negative behavior is?”

“When you behave in a way that hurts another entity.”

“And the learning is?”

The soft laughter returned. “You know the answer to that is karma,” she giggled. “Whatever we do comes back at us, that’s the learning. Remember how you talked to people who worked for you about how the opportunity in failure was about learning? Well, same deal.”

“People get nervous with the f word. The issue is really one of risk. People like to stretch themselves but sometimes they try to stretch too far. They may not have the capability, the information or skills to succeed.”

“The same is true when you create a life script. That’s way there are so many options. Understand that the options provide relief, a way out, but at a cost of creating more karma.”

“Which could have a positive side.”

I imagined her face scrunching. “Yeah, but not likely.”

“Back to the concern for lack of feedback.”

“Remember you created your destinies. They are your needs and your desires.”

“But with some prodding, right?”

“Well yes, we each conspire with the cosmic to create our scripts, but all the decisions are ultimately yours. Consequently the judgment is yours too.”

“I guess it’s similar to co creating objectives with an employee. If there is trust and open discussion then things usually work out.” I shook my head. The words ‘spirit guides’ were floating on the screen above me. “I have no conscious recollection of who or what they are.”

“You can say it.”



“Well I have a sense that I have been a spirit guide somewhere in my existence, and I know how important it is to play with a poker face.”

“Here is what I want you to do. Study the filled in boxes on the previous page and create a list of destinies, but don’t go nuts with it. Keep it to like three or five. When you are done, give yourself some feedback and then imagine a spirit guide reading it and giving feedback about what you had to say about yourself.”

“How do I create a destiny, what does that look like?”

I imagined penetrating eyes. “Don’t get intellectual about it,” I sensed a smirk. “You made some comments about relationships. You might also want to consider career as an aspect of destiny, and the destiny associated with psychic development as well.”

“I like those three.” I could feel myself nodding.

“Play with it,” the voice laughed. “Remember feedback is a gift in any form,” she paused briefly. “And you know that you have accomplished great things in this life, don’t you.”

“I do,” I smiled and closed my eyes. “I just need to hear it.”

\* \* \*

I scanned the chart over my head in search of themes on the topics that the woman suggested, then sat in silence for a long time and listened to the self talk that seemed to spring from me automatically. I imagined a team of spirit guides listening to my self talk, and waited patiently for comments. They came at me all at once. I opened my eyes and found myself smiling as I looked up at the screen. A familiar face hidden in shadow looked down at me. There was one caution that came forward in a mixture of single words and images. It had to do with time spent alone. The message was about maintaining my values, but at the same time not cutting myself off from the world around me. There was a hint that came forward about the idea of service, and finding ways to be of service. The message was a

bit conflicting too. The caution was around isolation, which I understand, but the idea of service had an other worldly essence that I could not comprehend.

“It is not a conflict.” A soothing manly voice resonated throughout the cave. “You can be of service here in the mundane world, and you can also be of service in cosmic and astral realms.”

“In the world of thought?”

“Yes, it begins there. It can also begin in the heart with profound feelings of love.”

Suddenly the shadowed face was rolling like a screen saver and a series of new words and images came up on the screen. The words ‘psychic development’ and ‘reincarnation’ scrolled the screen along with the shadowed face. I picked up the stone and placed it in my lap, then contemplated what I wanted to click on. I tried clicking on the face, but a feeling deep inside told me that it would not work. I tried anyway, and sure enough a little message box came up and said ‘not ready’. I clicked on ‘reincarnation’ and again a flow chart appeared. Everything was hazy and unclear and I worked with the stone to improve the resolution. It didn’t get any better, except for the last box, which was a picture of me.

“It isn’t the specifics about your past lives that is so intriguing for you now. It’s more about a question of purpose. Am I right?”

“Yes,” I nodded. The man’s voice was soothing and hypnotic.

“Within your construct of time, worlds end.”

“Excuse me?” I could feel myself tensing up as I looked at the screen and the dream I had when I was ten years old played back. The world blew apart, exploded.



“It doesn’t have anything to do with fault.” The voice was reassuring and rescued me just in time, as I was about to re-live the feelings of guilt and fear that followed the dream.

“And there are many astral components. Not exactly one for each world, but pretty close.”

“So what happens when a world ends?”

“The reincarnation schematic is over too. There is no longer an opportunity to evolve by means of the physical world.”

“What do you mean by evolve and physical world? I don’t get that relationship.”

“Negativity, and yes evil, exist in the physical world. It sometimes exists on the astral, but can never ascend to the cosmic realm. The negative element provides tremendous opportunity for growth and development.”

“What happens to all those souls?”

“They continue to evolve, but the learning and growth is a slower process.”

“So reincarnation is like a fast track.”

“You can think of it that way.”

The only light in the cave came from the light of the screen above me. The screen went black for a moment and the darkness absorbed me. Suddenly the screen reappeared and the words ‘psychic development’ flashed before me.

“You have been an initiate for a long time. Initiation is a personal thing, as there are many roads that lead to enlightenment. However, there is one outcome that all who travel the path have in common. Do you know what that is?”

“Well I know there is a mental component, you know, a realization that comes about from the chemical marriage of body and soul.”

“Yes that is true, but I am talking about something very physical. The color and hues of the aura are indicators of psychic development. At other times in human history an initiate’s worthiness was judged by the color of their aura.”

“I don’t see aura’s,” I studied the eyes of the face scrolling the screen. “I have no conscious recollection of any spirit guides.” I paused as I continued to study the face. “And I have not discovered the musical notes that resonate for me, at least not on a conscious level.”

“I know,” the voice said and stopped. “But you have done some pretty solid work in the area of visualization, haven’t you? You also have a sense for telekinesis, but you have chosen not to develop it.”

“It’s true.” In an instant I had a realization of all that I had done with visualization. I also had a realization of the sensations that came to me in my twenties when I touched money and other intimate objects.

“Bring yourself into the gestalt way of thinking that you talk about and you will find that there has been more psychic development then you realize. Project yourself to a state of now. Allow all your experience to become part of you in the now. Call to the masters and ask for their counsel.” The voice stopped and the screen above me went black. “And be of service, remembering that service is not restricted to the physical plane.”

I sat in the dark for awhile, then searched for my sunglasses and left the cave. As I walked I realized for the first time that behavior was not exclusively a mundane activity.

## EXPERIMENT: ASKING FOR FEEDBACK

### On Psychic Development

1. Imagine psychic development as one element of your life script. Think about your life. What aspects of psychic development do you imagine as preconceived destinies? Included should be practical elements of psychic development, areas you explored and integrated into your life. Include things such as visualization and magic, intuition, astral travel, etc. Also include any association with spiritual organizations, and any tools you may have learned to use along the way, such as astrology, tarot or numerology.
2. Ask yourself, “How did I do?” Create a self talk dialogue in your meditation. Include in the dialogue a discussion about what was learned, and how you used what was learned.
3. Imagine a spirit guide or guides listening to the dialogue. When the dialogue is done, ask for feedback.
4. Evaluate how this exercise might impact future choices. What is it that you need to start doing, stop doing, continue to do?

*Note: You may want to write out steps 1 and 2, or a portion of them, and then move into a silent meditation.*

## EXPERIMENT: ASKING FOR FEEDBACK

### On Destiny and Choice

1. Imagine you could see your life script to this point in your life. Identify two or three destinies you feel are prevalent in your life. Destinies may include aspects of career or work, relationships, as well as aspects of diversity such as race, gender, sexual orientation.
2. Ask yourself how you are doing with each of these destinies. Create a self talk dialogue in your meditation. Include in the dialogue a discussion about any significant behavioral choices you may have made. Allow yourself to visualize the fate or consequences of these choices. What do you feel good about? What do you feel not so good about?
3. Imagine a spirit guide or guides listening to the self talk. Allow the self talk to end and ask for feedback.
4. Evaluate how the choices you have made impact your energy. What inspires you? What repulses you?
5. Imagine there is fast track to one or more of your destinies. What does it look like? What might you need to start doing, stop doing, continue to do?

*Note: You may want to write out steps 1 and 2, or a portion of them, and then move into a silent meditation.*

## CIGARETTES AND FRIED CHICKEN

It's the same dream but I have not had it in years. There is some visual stuff going on in the dream, but mostly it is emotional. The dream takes place in the present, but it is all about behavior from the past. I am very conscious of the distinction between past and present in terms of who I am, but not in terms of my behavior.

"What are you doing?" I asked myself as I walked down the hall and reached in my pocket for a pack of cigarettes.

"What? Can't I smoke here?"

"You don't smoke, remember?"

"I do remember quitting," I lit a cigarette. "But I remember smoking too. Maybe I started again."

"Then maybe you can quit again."

An aura of confusion comes over me. I let it go and feel disappointed in myself.

Inside me there is an odd mixture of hope and despair. How did I do it? If I did it before I can do it again. I study the filtered tip and fingered the pack in my breast pocket. "This doesn't feel or smell like memory, it is the real thing. I can't believe I started this again."

"You didn't."

"Yes I did."

"You're dreaming."

"So what?"

"Do you remember if you smoke now?"

"I think I do. It's sad that I started again. I didn't realize I did. I don't want to do this."

"When was the last time you had one?"

"I don't know," I inhaled and exhaled smoke. It felt so natural. Cigarettes were part of my life at one time, so I guess the experience will be for all time.

Suddenly I opened my eyes and looked at the ceiling in a fully conscious state. I knew instantly that I did not smoke, and remembered quitting over twenty years ago.

"But the desire is still with you," the self talk continued the instant my eyes closed. Suddenly I was back in dream time smoking, feeling as though I quit and started again, feeling sad, then feeling inspired to quit again.

"You know what this is about," a thirty five year old me is looking in the mirror along with the reflection of a candle. "There is behavior that needs to change. You know how to make change happen."

"You mean this isn't about temptation?"

"It is about putting temptation in it's place."

"Let's get some fried chicken."

In an instant I am sitting in a restaurant with a group of friends. We are surrounded by platters of fried chicken, french fries and cole slaw. "I am pretty thin now," I say to myself with a nod.

"You're so skinny!" A heavy set woman pushes up against me as though she could read my thoughts. "It's not going to kill you."

"I will have one piece."

I slowly picked at one piece of breast and engaged in frivolous conversation.

The heavy set woman glared at me and then poked me in the chest with her forefinger. "If this was a dream you would be eating more than that."

"But it isn't a dream. This is stupid. I don't need to explain myself to you."

"It is a dream shit head. And I am you. You are everyone sitting at this table. No one is here but you. Come on, let's role play, you be me."

"No," I crossed my arms and sat there. I watched everyone at the table eat the food.

"Can't you taste it?" The fat woman taunted and waved a chicken leg in the air. "Hmmm."

I continued to sit silently and then picked again at my single chicken breast. It was delicious. "You know what lady?" I looked at the woman. "I am you. I can feel how heavy and uncomfortable you are. You are not a happy person."

"I am happy now," she shook her head and devoured a french fry in one gulp. "Did you taste it?"

"I did. And it was wonderful."

"So eat," she shrugged with both hands.

Suddenly I was awake and again staring at the ceiling. I wanted fried chicken. The dream was so real and the chicken tasted so good. I closed my eyes, telling myself that if it's just a dream there is no reason why I couldn't eat as much fried chicken as I wanted. I tried and tried to make the dream come back, but it just wouldn't come.

"Consequences," a voice clicked in my head. "Choices. If you can win the battle of desire in your dreams, you can control the desire when consciousness returns to the physical body."

"Why?"

"Because the consequences have influenced your thought, changed your values. A change in values can give you the power to change behavior."

"But the consequences are not real in dream time."

"Think about that for a moment. The lady in the dream was fat, and she was not happy about it. And at the far end of the table was a man with a small hole in his neck."

I was suddenly back at the table holding a french fry, staring silently at the man at the end of the table. His shirt unbuttoned all by itself and a scar traveled down his chest like a Frankenstein zipper.

"The doctor's don't know why it just keeps opening," the man looked at me. He is my father ten years after heart surgery.

Toss, turn, uncontrollable self talk in between crazy dreams. Now that awful dream returns about pulling something from my mouth. It's like a strand of fabric that is bunched up like string. The more I pull the more comes out. I wake up before the pulling ends.

"There are a couple of themes here," I rolled over on my side. "One has to do with choices today, and the other has to do with choice history. It's an intricate dance. I am who I was who I am who I will be. History hangs in my aura, pulling me back and pushing me forward until there is no past or future but only now. I close my eyes. As above, so below."

three auras of me  
blend into one

*a physical me  
of skin and bone  
and chemical mass*

*a psychic me,  
a host of characters  
continually evolving  
into new aspects of personality*

*a spiritual me,  
a peaceful evolution of soul*

a blend of auras dance  
in a communion of  
now,  
testing and tasting  
the experience of each

*can you see just me,  
the glow of color  
in anticipation of the perfect blend  
for a golden dawn?*

*bring me dreams and projections  
that plunge me  
beyond the mundane  
while still in a conscious state*

*test me, talk to me,  
help me with my plan*

a blend of auras dance  
in service to each other

## ROUND TRIP TICKET

“Hey,” a young man nodded on the street as the L screeched above us. “You can take the 6 into the city.”

“Huh?” I studied the young man. I knew him but he looked different in a way that I could not put together.

“You don’t remember? I was one of the guys you interviewed when the new group home was about to open. You didn’t think I’d fit in, remember?”

My brain rushed through a horde of faces that I pummeled with questions. I played back the social worker’s faces, the look of absence and innocence, the scant descriptions written on numerous forms, the feeling that information was being kept from me. Ultimately it wasn’t the data that swayed my decision, it was the feeling that came in my gut. Suddenly I remembered this character. This was a high functioning home. I didn’t think he would fit in. I presented my perspective but I didn’t win. He was admitted and I wound up working with him.

“Got me a round trip ticket,” the thin young man announced proudly and marched up the steps to the train.

“You didn’t understand,” he looked me in the eye as I sat down beside him on the train. “I needed relief.”

As I sat there on the train I remembered reading his file, thinking that the medication was making him worse rather than better. I remember interviewing his Psychiatrist, and the four foot pile of folders that prevented us from fully seeing her face.

“I went with you, remember? Only I took the train and you drove in from Westchester.”

“Is that where we are going now?”

“Only if you want to.”

"I don't want to, do you?"

"Nah, let's just be a couple of ghosts and drift around the city."

My mental state was still there in that high rise office, stuck in a still frame of the doctor trying to find her file. She found it and the still frame kicked into play.

"Well," she sighed and slid the pile of folders to one side so that she could look me in the eye. I had a sense that she had history that was not in the file, and I was right. She made no eye contact with the client for the entire time that I was there. All her focus and attention was on me. "Do you know his story?" She looked down at the floor with her legs spread as she told elements of his tragic story. Her legs then slapped tight and she shifted her focus and stared me down.

The story shocked me and I sat with my mouth open for a moment or two, and then I came at her with questions about his diagnosis. It was awkward to hear his history and to have this conversation with our client sitting right there. Part of me felt like a pompous and inexperienced intern, while the other part of me felt like a supervisor trying to improve the Psychiatrist's performance. I abandoned both sets of feelings with wide eyes, and gave the Psychiatrist a broad smile.

"Well," the Psychiatrist stood up abruptly. "We could bring up the dosage on this one," she pointed at a page that this listed his medication. "And eliminate this one," her finger slid down the page. "What do you think?"

"Well you are the expert here," I stood up and my client stood up as well. "You know the history and you know the client. However, my philosophy has always been that less is better in terms of medication."

"Yes, yes," she nodded. "But he needs relief," she cocked her head and studied me. "We will eliminate one medication, but know that his behavior may change and you will have to deal with that."

"Yes I know," I smiled and shook her hand. "I write the behavior plans, remember?"

"Lucky you," she closed her eyes and opened them and then escorted us to the door.

"You are smooth," my client nodded as we got on the express elevator to go down. "You originally a Jersey dude?"

"No," I laughed. "Connecticut."

"Almost the same thing," he shrugged.

"Let's head toward the river and follow the park downtown."

"Walking is good," he nodded and looked down. "You put that in one of my plans."

"I did," I looked at him and the doors opened. "Does it help?"

"Absolutely," he cocked his head. "Walking and music, that's my salvation."

We walked along the river in silence. A teenage boy with beady eyes and a sad expression slapped a dog on the butt and then pushed down on him to make him sit. "Yeah you better obey," the boy said as the dog stood between his legs and he continued to push. Two small children laughed.

"You felt it, huh?" My client broke our silence and we continued to walk.

"Yes," I wanted to run and then I wanted to scream.

"It's not him. You just tell yourself it's not him. You just keep walking. Count to 10 backwards. Tell yourself that it is just someone who looks like him."

I became my client and found myself walking in his flashback mode. There was a stench of urine and a group of kids. I was on my hands and knees and a teenage boy was standing over me with a dog dish. "Eat your dinner," the kid dropped the bowl and pushed my head down. "Eat it, eat it! You better obey me!"

"It's true, they made me eat it," my client picked up the pace. "The kids use to ride me too."

"Was this in the foster home?"

"Um," he nodded. "And you thought I had some genetic thing."

"Well there is this idea that each of us have predispositions that can become diseases or disorders when triggered by the right conditions and environment."

"They triggered me up for sure," he cocked his head. "It's the distorted perceptions of reality that trip me up. Well I mean it isn't like I run to the refrigerator when the phone rings," he laughed. "And I never barked at the doorbell."

"Do the drugs make it better?"

"Yeah but they take away something. It's like they calm me down, but at the same time that distortion thing can be even more amplified."

"So what do the drugs take away?"

"Passion."

"What do you mean?"

"Well they may make me even more disoriented, but sometimes I just don't care, I give in to it." He kicked a rock. "I scare you huh?"

"You did from day one," I gave him an honest half smile. "I mean I liked you from the beginning," I said quickly. "But your behavior seemed so unpredictable."

"I'm glad the others talked you into admitting me. I've been to parties at those other houses, you know where everything is locked down and you have to be escorted by someone when you want to go out to the store or anywhere."

"Thinks worked out."

"You know what really helps?"

"What?"

"Having people around who care," he scratched his head. "You know why? Because they distract you. They know you and they see it coming and they do something to get you out of your head, and if they read you right then everything is really cool."

"So the drugs help and having the right people around help," I nodded. "What doesn't work so well?"

"It's all about people. You see I don't choose the people that come into my life like you do. Most of the people in my life are staff, you know. I hear you thinking sometimes about being around people of like mind. Well all I am around are staff and people with problems like me."

"What makes you think I have any more control about the people that come in to my life then you do?" I squinted at him. "We attract people to us, you know?"

"Come one now." He gave me a sheepish grin then made a funny face. "What do you think happens when people die? Will we be ghosts like this?"

"Do you believe in God?"



“Not if He white.” His tone was angry. “My daddy is white and he’s the devil.” His tone became more subdued.

“There have been lots of devils in your life. I’m sorry about that.”

“Me too,” he spit on the sidewalk. “It’s nice to just be out of myself like this so I can think about things, you know. This is the best relief.” His strides grew longer as we walked and it was difficult to keep up with him. “Where are they now?”

“Who?”

“All them devils.”

He was silent for a moment. “We ain’t talking boogeyman shit, I’m talking real people. Devils are real. They ain’t no ghosts. My daddy he beat me, he fuck me, my brother too, and they always yellin at me and callin me retard. And that family in New Jersery.” He spit on the sidewalk. “I was their fucking dog and they made me live in the basement. They made me walk on my hands and knees. They fed me out of a dog dish.” He spit again. “And I let them damn kids ride me like a pony.”

“I’m sorry. You have a right to be angry.”

“You damn right,” he nodded. “They made me like this. They made me retarded.”

“I don’t think you are retarded.”

“That’s what the paper say.”

“Not exactly,” I laughed. “But you know if I went through what you went through and someone gave me a bunch of tests I don’t think I would do to well.”

“I guess,” he nodded. “What do the paper say anyway?”

“They say you are borderline retarded, which means no one is really sure, but that’s a good thing.”

“Why?”

“Because it gets you better funding.”

“What else do the paper say?”

“That you are a schizophrenic with paranoid and delusional features.”

“That means,” he stroked his chin. “That I can’t adjust to living in real time. All those things that happened to me keep coming back. Sometimes when I see other people I see those devils and they make me sick.”

“They scare you, make you anxious, and make you angry.”

“And when I freak out or do crazy shit,” he laughed. “I’m working things out.”

I said nothing and nodded. Our pace began to slow down.

“So where are they now?”

“Well your father died, remember?”

My client stopped walking and his mouth fell open. I felt myself shaking inside, wanting to scream, but I held it in and focused on his eyes. “Then he’s still out there. He can still come after me after when I am dead.”

“I don’t know about that,” I held my gaze. “I think a lot of it is your choice. You do not have to relive it. You do not have to be the victim.”

“I can beat his ass,” he pounded a fist into an open palm.

“And those feelings are exactly what will call him back to you.” My eyes grew wide. “Remember you asked me about people and you said something

about not having any control? Well I think you do have control. Control is in thought and feeling.”

“I feel retarded. I feel like a crazy person. And I feel like it’s all his fault.” His eyes were wide and mostly white. “And I feel like I need to get back at all those people who hurt me.”

“You want to hurt them,” I shook my head. “I understand the feeling.” I continued the nod. “But what about feeling retarded and like a crazy person? Do you want that?”

“No,” he gave me a funny look and we continued to walk.

“I remember the first time I freaked out screaming when you were in the house. You just didn’t know what to do,” he laughed. “It had nothing to do with you, you know that.”

“I do,” I nodded with a smile.

“So how do I get control? How do I get better?”

“You change your thinking, which in turn will change your behavior and how you feel.”

“Hard to do when you are angry.”

“Well we won’t do it when you are angry. We will do it when you are calm and relaxed.”

“Do what?” He lowered his head. “You writing me a new plan?”

“I’m not writing it, we are thinking it and talking it out. You already know how the plans go.”

“So what do we call this plan?”

“Petition for self love and peace.”

“Ok so go, start it up. Tell me the first part. The reason we are doing this.”

“When you accept yourself for who you are you can find inner peace, a feeling of contentment.”

“Ok,” he hesitated. “I guess.”

“Another reason is because when you are at peace, you can love yourself. Eventually this desire will consume you, and you will attract people and situations who will bring peace and love to you.”

“Cool, so what is it we are actually going to do?”

“Right before you go to sleep I want you to think about God, and tell yourself that God loves you. Open yourself to this thought and say it to yourself several times.”

“Then what?”

“Tell yourself that God is love, and that God loves. Then simply think about this loving relationship with God. You will find yourself starting to reason that if God loves you, then you are worthy of being loved and loving yourself.”

“Suppose He doesn’t love me?” His eyebrows furled. How could He love me if He allowed all this to happen?”

“Maybe He didn’t have anything to do with it. Maybe it was something you brought on yourself, something you needed or wanted to happen.”

“That’s crazy.”

“Maybe, but it couldn’t hurt to ask.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, right before you are about to fall asleep, calmly ask God to help you understand why all this happened to you. Do it in a very non emotional way. Just ask how come. Say that you don’t need the answer right away, but someday you want to know. Tell yourself you are a good person, and really believe it. Tell yourself that you are worthy of God’s love, then let all these thoughts go and fall asleep.”

“Is that it?”

“Well that’s the first part, which is about feeling good about yourself, and loving yourself because you know that God loves you. The second part is about attracting peace and love.”

“You mean a girl?”

“Not necessarily, but maybe. A couple of times a week, instead of asking God why, imagine yourself around loving people, and maybe even a special girl. Think about what that might be like, what the people might be like, what they might be saying or doing.”

“That’s like daydreaming.”

“Yes, but remember there is power in thought. If you work hard at this it will happen. It may not happen right away, but it will happen and things will begin to change for you.”

“You people always talk about measuring things. How are we going to keep track of this thing?”

“Watch what happens,” I shrugged. “See if any new people or situations come about in your life.”

“That is not specific enough,” he took on my analytical facial expression. “I need more detail.”

“Then create it.” I gave him a sideways glance. “You could write things down.”

“And what’s my reward for doing this?”

“Your thoughts becoming reality.”

“Really cool.”

“Still got that round trip ticket?”

“Yup. We going back to train the staff on how to work with me on this plan?”

“This isn’t a plan like that,” I looked him in the eye. “But when you are thinking about things you can think of me too.”

“Do you think of me?”

“I do. And when you think of me we attract one another.”

“You know, I don’t even remember who you are.”

“Does it matter?”

“What matters is that I am not my diagnosis. My illness is not my identity. I got that one big time.”

“Me too,” I laughed. “You know you’ve done a lot for me.”

“How?”

“Well you changed my thinking. First about the whole medication thing, about what’s right and what’s wrong, and secondly about mental illness and what that’s about. You are no different then I am.”

“Anything spiritual you want to share?”

“Empathy is in the realm of psychic, and treatment does not have to be a written plan or even a physical activity. There are mental and spiritual aspects that we should consider.”

“Go ahead say it. You are thinking about unconditional love.”

“Well I am thinking about the riddle of self, and the inherent conflict.”

“Well if self is truly an illusion, what does that say about unconditional love?”

“It’s a round trip ticket. One self can empathize and become another self so that both can become whole. But it only works if each self has the capacity to love themselves first.”

mentors and mentees  
leaders and followers  
teachers and students

breed in and  
out of one another  
like some kind  
of natural law

comrades too

an invisible line  
ahead of me  
behind me  
with me

all worthy  
all ready  
to give and take  
and share

...worthiness is behavior based

## ESSAY: BEHAVIORAL BEST CHOICES

Karma is the consequence of behavior. Our destiny in the current incarnation is a combination of our collective karma, desire, and evolutionary or learning need. Destiny contains multiple themes. One theme may have to do with relationships, another may have to do with career or challenges with our physical health. Our individual destinies and karma are often linked to the environment in which we find ourselves, which includes the people that come into our lives. Each destiny contains numerous options or paths. The paths we choose dictate our fate, only to become either instant karma or new destiny in the making.

How we behave today directly correlates to our immediate fate, as well as the destiny we will create for the next incarnation. Sometimes our behavior is an automatic response to a stimulus that can either come from within, or from the external world. These automatic responses are triggered by safety and survival instincts, as well as our personal values. At other times our responses are triggered by desire. Sometimes, however, desire carries negative consequence and our response to stimulus is based upon a planned action rather than immediate gratification. Negative consequences carry with them an element of learning.

Planned action can become a fast track to success, to achieving a particular destiny. When karma is done the small voice within tells us it is time to change, to move on to new or different destinies. However, the fast track to fulfilling a destiny is not common. Often we make choices that lead us off track, and we may even behave in ways that create unfavorable karma. An inner voice speaks and sometimes we are inspired to change. At other times it is our physical body, our physical and mental health that inspires us to change. Sometimes we still choose not to listen, and the inspiration for change comes to us from friends and loved ones.

When we finally do listen, regardless of where the inspiration for change comes from, we find ourselves engaged in self talk. We think. We rationalize. If we allow the self talk process to continue we find ourselves thinking about consequences, and planning new action to get us back on track. Sometimes when take action to change our behavior or start something new we find ourselves overcome by challenges. The self talk that inspired us to change

our values based upon rational thinking suddenly becomes overcome with self talk that is based in emotion. “Why should I change? I am a good person. I am worthy of my desires.” The inspiration can also trigger a rationalization process in reverse. “My behavior isn’t so bad. My behavior isn’t my fault. I have too many things going on right now. I’ll change my behavior next week, next month, next year....”

Psychic development is destiny. Like all destinies, a spiritual destiny has its roots in a blend of karma and desire. The spiritual path is a choice, and although it is about spirit it is very much a psychological component of our personality. There are very specific behaviors that support psychic development, and other behaviors that do not. Generally speaking, behavior that supports the welfare of other people and our environment supports our own psychic development, and behavior that is obsessed with self gratification is not.

Psychic development destinies can take many forms. One may involve the acquisition of information and knowledge, and another may involve some aspect of service. Planned action can help us behave in a ways that support our journey. They include:

- Spiritual reading: finding authors that support our particular interests
- Affiliation with a spiritual organization, such as AMORC
- Meditation
- Career and volunteer opportunities that support our inspiration for service

Behaviors that get us off track often require a thought out strategy to change them. These behaviors typically involve affiliation with people who have radically different values, and may also include consumption of food or substance that harms the body and/or dulls the mind. When thinking about changing behavior, it is important to think specifically about what you want to do differently, and how you will deal with negative self talk and any conflicting desires. On the next page is an experiment that may help to initiate change and make things happen.

## EXPERIMENT: CHANGING BEHAVIOR & MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

Reflection is the first step to creating change in our lives. When you reflect, an idea for a specific change will come to mind. Consider the following when deciding whether or not this change should be integrated into your life.

1. What is the rational? Engage in self talk and have a dialogue about what you think versus what you feel about making a change in your behavior. What are the risk? Consequences? What will happen if I do/do not make this change? What are the karmic or fate implications?
2. What specific goal(s) do I have in mind? Is it measurable? Is there a time frame? Is there a specific achievement? Can I see, feel or intuit a specific result?
3. What method will I use to achieve this goal? How will I do it? Is there a procedure or process I will use? Is there a formal program, training, or group you will participate in that will guide you? How will you handle sudden urges to revert to old or unwanted behavior?
4. How will you celebrate success? Are there stages of success? How will you recognize milestones and what can you do to reward yourself?

## MY EVOLVING CREED: BEHAVIOR

1. I believe that the people, circumstances and environmental conditions that come to us in life are planned prior to each incarnation
2. I believe that free will is a range of behavioral possibilities that each of us build into our life script
3. I believe that fate and destiny are linked to behavioral choices, and that these choices correspond to a range of personal and spiritual developmental opportunities
4. I believe physical and mundane desires bring short term pleasure and gratification, and that they sometimes distract and get us off track. These desires are especially harmful when they become habitual patterns and evolve to addictive behavior
5. I believe in behavior management and that by managing behavior we progress to optimum levels of personal and spiritual development
6. I believe that behavioral consequences are the intention of reincarnation, and that their purpose is to teach and experience

Cluster 9:

*Partners in Magic*



## SUMMARY OF CLUSTER 9: PARTNERS IN MAGIC

### *Not Like the Last Time*

451

A broken foot brings back memories of a broken leg and prompts a reflection on the nature of accidents and their relationship to destiny. Destiny is discussed by ghosts of self at various ages, who review the approaches and consequences of amending desire.

### *Assumption*

467

A dream invitation to become a person who can answer questions about the nature of the cosmos evolves to become a dream about answering someone else's questions. As the assumption of personalities unfold, dialogues take place between an old man and a little boy about the nature of magic. Also discussed by various character personifications of different ages are the cycles of life, the stages of human development, and those aspects of reality that can be controlled by magic.

### *Secret Gardens*

483

On a quest to meet a priest who is really an old friend, a dialogue takes place about religious beliefs in an old confessional. The priest becomes a tour guide of two secret gardens; one contains a museum of spiritual artifacts and the other personifications of sexual memory. The priest, who also becomes a former priest, facilitates a discussion on how our experiences and involvement with others become an extension of self.

### *Search for Gold*

512

A reflection on forgiveness becomes a satirical drama as the personifications of three nuns evolve. One nun is the personification of anger, one of fear and doubt, and the third of peace and knowledge. Unannounced, the three nuns help to facilitate the meaning of a dream about the evolution of our species.

### *Essay: Magic in the Mundane World*

422

A discussion about magic and the natural laws of harmony and love that govern it.

**Experiment: God of My Heart** 425  
 An experiment in accessing the harmony of desire and intention, and their impact on our partners in magic.

**My Evolving Creed: Magic** 426  
 A list of relative, personal truths about magic.

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<i>i think of myself as a cosmic partner</i>	480
<i>i partner with</i>	481
<i>i caught a glimpse</i>	482
<i>here in my purgatory of dreams</i>	509
<i>me is forever evolving to not me</i>	510
<i>to say I don't trust reality</i>	511
<i>there are some partners in magic</i>	520
<i>in the twilight stream</i>	521

now  
 an adverb  
 now  
 a noun  
 clarifies  
 when existence  
 exists  
 as though  
 existence  
 where contingent upon time

reality is  
 a  
 spectrum  
 of  
 now and then,  
 dancing  
 its way  
 toward truth,  
 toward  
 what truly is

go ahead and back up

the effort produces  
 a realization  
 of now  
 and then  
 as a spectrum similar to  
 light

yes, go head and back up  
 to  
 discover  
 now what,  
 and what now

mind  
creates  
what is  
and what will be

action  
creates  
reactions  
and reactions  
create more action

some  
give in and call it  
magic,  
or give credence to predestination

others  
seek to take control  
of their  
creations,  
understand the consequence  
of their actions,  
and build upon the destiny they created between  
lives

me?  
yeah, yeah,  
I struggle with the latter

imagine it  
visualize it

*a physical me  
genuflects in the presence of  
a psychic me  
and we come to understand  
abstinence  
and the absence of behavior  
as planned events,  
all part of an intentional process  
on the journey to transformation*

imagination brings  
possibility, and a  
degree of control  
*focus,  
hocus pocus,*

visualization brings  
new reality,  
new experience  
*become!*

then what?

*suppose,  
just suppose we were on an evolutionary  
track  
with capability to experience more than self*

*image it,  
intentionally acting on the behalf of others  
and being so evolved  
and so aware  
of the consequences of  
selfish behavior  
that selfless  
behavior becomes the norm*

*image having love built in  
to such a degree  
that we become  
a blend of self and non self  
beings  
who populate the earth*

suppose with an **i**  
instead of **we**;  
supposes preferenced with we  
lead to  
expectations  
that limit  
and restrict  
to one time, linear  
perception

*i interpret that  
as a return to nada, the world between realities*

i transition from visualization  
to focused behavior and  
the big wait  
open - on all three planes at the same time

*alchemy of  
then and will be  
churn  
in a visualization of now*

California!  
the house finally closed  
and i move just as i visualized

like magic

*thank you  
for all the gifts  
that have been given me*

*thank you for the people  
the situations  
the environment  
and the invitation  
to share identity*

we are still here,  
all of us  
are moving with you

*who knew  
the high desert  
would become a now experience of  
New York, Maine  
and Connecticut  
California too  
yes,  
in the mix  
of was and will be*

the now what  
voice  
crackles in my head  
like an  
old broken record

*complacent days  
give way to agitated nights  
and the past  
does a fast forward and rewind  
at the same time  
until there is  
a crack in my consciousness*

now what?

*an urgent  
self imposed cry  
for metamorphosis  
creates a blog  
that projects itself from this monad,  
this i yearning  
for integration*

and what is  
it  
that you expect?

*i expect  
only what is*

what is  
can only be  
what you expect

*then i guess i should stop expecting*

shoulda, woulda, coulda...

visualization works  
when behaviors change  
in support of it.... continuously

*then what?*

it comes  
in pieces,  
one slice at a time

*and then what?*

it continually becomes,  
shaping and reshaping

how many times  
have you methamorphosized  
to and from nada  
in search of realignment?

*if i am stuck,  
facilitate me*

*facilitate me please!*

what makes you  
think  
you have total control?

*i am the monad  
remember?  
the single soul  
substance of became and become*

like a horney  
teenage  
faggot

*exuse me?*  
you lust for it,  
you get it  
you got it  
you forgot it,  
like consciousness

*it's dual, isn't it?  
my perception becomes my reality,  
even in the presence of them,  
all those other monads  
and our combined desire*

yes, yes  
and your consciousness of them  
creates time  
and space  
*then it is illusion*

there is actuality

*and nada is an intentional and temporary state*

people  
who think  
like  
machines

make  
machines  
think like  
machines

machines  
and technology  
don't  
have  
souls

yet  
i  
get  
stuck  
on the  
intentions  
of  
the souls  
who  
created  
them

and  
lust  
for  
some degree  
of control

reality is  
that accidents  
happen  
unintentionally

unexpected circumstances  
and  
events  
seem fortuitous,  
and within that  
mundane  
window  
of reality  
it's all about chance

and it is about chance  
and luck  
or unlock,  
but in actuality  
an  
accident is  
a contingency,  
a preconceived decision box  
in the flow  
chart of ones  
destiny

sometimes  
it is the product  
of personal, cognitive magic;  
an opportunity to taste where expectation and  
knowledge  
are misaligned

and at other times  
it is the consequence of  
grace -  
or grace's negative polarity

## NOT LIKE THE LAST TIME

I fell. I didn't realize the step was there. It was a simple fall off a six inch step and I broke the fall with my hands. Even so, my foot and leg were sore. I ignored the pain and painted the fence in the front yard, then went in the house and took off my sock and shoe. The foot did not look bad, but within an hour it swelled to twice its size.

"You broke it I'm sure," there was a pause on the phone. "I'll come home and bring you to the emergency room."

"No no," I hesitated. "It can't be broken. I mean it doesn't feel broken. I broke this same leg a few years back and the pain was so intense I couldn't stand it. This isn't like that."

"I still think it's broken."

"Well, don't rush home. When you get here I'll see how I feel and if it is bad I will want to go to the emergency room and get it x-rayed."

I was in total denial. This could not be happening to me, not again, but sure enough a bone was broken in my foot. Although I was not in a full cast, the experience was very familiar and quite similar to when I broke my leg. I would lie in a semi sleep in the blue bedroom and think back to 1992, forgetting I was in 2008. The house in California reminded me of the house in New York, especially the bedroom, and even with my eyes open I was lost in time.

"How could you do it again?"

I studied the peripheral view of the ghost in the mirror to the left of the bed. He is me on crutches with a dark beard, dressed in a grey suit with pants that cover the cast.

"How did you get pants over that thing?" I asked the apparition and studied the big white foot.



The apparition shrugged with his mouth closed. I shifted in the bed to look at him more directly but the reflection was gone until I looked straight ahead, and then I could see him out of the corner of my eye. “I don’t remember dressing like that with a cast.”

“But you remember the rubber boot?” The ghost smirked with a nod.

“Oh yes, and sitting on that stool in the shower. I am so glad I don’t have to do that again. At least I can take this thing off.” I changed my gaze and studied the big black boot on my leg. “It’s a pain to take on and off, but I am very grateful that it comes off.”

“So it’s going to happen to me again,” he looked down and when he looked up he was wearing bright yellow sweatpants cut at the knee and a grey sweatshirt. He was a Polaroid snapshot that was lost and found and stuck in my memory like a song that won’t stop playing.

“It’s a strong possibility.”

“Not a simple yes, huh?” His weight shifted from one crutch to the other as he leaned to one side and scratched his head. “You’ve been thinking a lot about accidents and the nature of accidents lately. What conclusions have you come to?”

“In actuality there are no accidents, only contingencies.”

“So accidents are intentional?”

“Sort of, but they are not conscious intentions.”

“I didn’t intent this on any level,” the younger me said rebelliously.

“Sometimes the intention doesn’t come from self, but with the broken leg and the broken foot I think they did.”

“Why?”

“Again a contingency,” I reached back to fluff the pillow. “An opportunity to align behavior and destiny without bringing on too much additional fate.”

“Or karma,” I cracked my knuckles. “When this first happened I thought I would be getting some time off, a chance to take a break, but the exact opposite is happening. Instead of things slowing down and getting easier, they are getting more difficult.”

“You thought the alignment was about changing the pace of your life? Making things simpler?”

“I don’t know about alignment. I just thought things would slow down for me.”

“And not only didn’t they slow down, they became more intense.”

“So what’s the message?”

“There are many messages. A big message has to do with capability. I didn’t realize how capable I truly was. And the other thing I didn’t realize is that I have a choice in how I want to use that capability.”

“What else?”

“Sometimes I make a decision about what I want to go after, what I want to do, and once it gets going I want something else.”

“Any parallels to the now of 2008?”

“I think about that a lot. It’s kind of that same theme about moving too fast and moving too slow. I get lost in what is more appropriate. It isn’t so much about going after what I want, it’s about energy and pace. I like things to move along quickly, but I also like periods of inactivity.”

“When you really want something you go after it. You not only visualize and do mental work, you follow up with all the mundane aspects as well.”

“But sometimes there is a conflict of ambition and the true winner doesn’t come through.”

“And sometimes what you are calling the true winner is not the one that your heart truly wants to win. It’s like that childhood dream about accepting too much change at the store, and then waking up and wishing you had given it back.”

“Let’s talk about your situation. It will be easier to be objective. You made a decision that you no longer wanted to be in management, and you let everyone know. But you did it at a time when there was tremendous opportunity for you, and you lived the conflict.”

“What do mean I lived the conflict?”

“You didn’t get promoted even though you were groomed for a more senior role.”

“And the position never got filled,” I shook my head emphatically.

“Technically no, but every aspect of that job eventually became your responsibility. It was called temporary, and although it was temporary it was still a full year. The point is, you did the job without the compensation or the status.”

“What a fool I am.”

“Oh no. You needed that experience and you got it. It wasn’t the money or the recognition that you needed, it was the experience. I have no regrets.” I could feel my eyes grow wide, and then I closed them.

“So there is a conflict of desire?”

“Sort of,” I could see myself in the yellow sweatpants with the big cast. “You followed a passion, and yes the passion was aligned with destiny, with experience you wanted in this life.”

“But I thought I was done with it before I was done with it, and if I followed that path things would have gone a different way.”

“Funny how the accident provided opportunity. What I thought I wanted was to slow down, but that wasn’t really what I wanted.”

“I wanted a rest. It was a difficult pace and I was tired, but my desire to slow down was premature. So what’s the deal now?”

I slipped into a dream about the office and hotel in England. I was there only a couple of months after the cast was taken off. My eyes opened and I studied the blue-green wall. I was lost in time and space, lost in the nada of not being able to do what I desire. I want to ride a bike and I cannot. I want to take the car to the store and I cannot drive. I plan all my walking activity to conserve the number of steps required to get around.

“You said you sometimes prefer periods of inactivity. Here’s a great opportunity to slow down.”

“There are two words there; prefer and opportunity. I accept there is opportunity in this, but to say there is a preference is just not accurate.”

“It’s temporary, just a few weeks.”

“Oh, and I am very grateful for that.” I slipped into a dreamtime memory. I was in a wheelchair in a men’s room and could not get the door open because it opened inward. Finally, someone came in and I was able to wheel myself out. I wheel myself down the hall toward a group of people that I know well. They pause to stare and break out in laughter.

“Oh,” a secretary I’ve known forever covers her mouth. “What happened to you? Is that real?” She pointed at the cast, her other hand still covering her mouth. “We though you were doing something for a new ADA law or something. Did you really hurt yourself?”

I followed up with the facilities people. I knew them well because I managed the small training facility next door, and there was always a problem with

the plumbing or the heat or some other issue. “Well,” the director cocked his head and looked down at me. “We’re doin ya a favor ya know.” He had a thick Irish accent. “Technically yur not supposed ta be in da buildin at all. It is not designed for wheelchair access.”

I knew he was right, and according to policy I should have been out on sick leave. I rolled over and could feel the weight of the cast, then remembered I had a big boot instead of a cast. In dreamtime I was still in a cast. I could smell the director’s cologne. We were outside the building. I was in a wheelchair and he was standing over me. He wheeled me to the building next door. I spent a lot of time being wheeled around from meeting to meeting. I wondered what meeting I had next. Faces seemed to scan over the top of my head and I became anxious about the next meeting, hoping that it wasn’t too far away and that someone could wheel me.

“Oh,” the VP of quality who looked like what’s his name from the price is right grabbed the back of my chair. “I’m in that meeting too.”

He was in all my meetings. We were in opposing political positions, but the chit chat time between meetings gave us a chance to get to know one another beyond the politics.

“So,” it was a Saturday morning and I did not want to be at work but there was no alternative. “What is it we need to talk about?”

“Strategy,” the black female VP cocked her head in a southern way that was distinctly her own. “I’ve hired a consultant who is helping me work through this project, and I think he can coach you also. He has done global implementations like this.” She smiled politely. “Mike this Mike,” she laughed. “I’ll just call you Mike G,” she looked at the consultant.

“I am Mike G too,” I gave them a friendly chuckle. “No matter,” I said soberly and then instantly hoped I didn’t sound snotty. My mind was reeling with how I could use this guy, with what I could off load. What I really needed help on was how to deal with the price is right man from quality. I just couldn’t figure out how to work with him. He agreed to everything in my presence, and then went off and did just the opposite.

“You talk too much,” the consultant playfully kicked the cast. “Be strategic in building an agenda and stick to it.” He reached out and touched the foot. “Stick to the agenda,” he said with a grin. “Don’t ask and don’t tell.”

“You read my mind,” I closed my eyes and opened them. I was no longer in a conference room, but rather in a small room in an old New England house. The ceiling was low and a small fire simmered in a huge stone fireplace across from where we were sitting.

“So you finally moved to California.” The consultant’s voice was soft and seductive.

“Umm,” I leaned back in the sofa and noticed I was wearing the boot instead of the cast. “I’ve wanted to live there since my early twenties, but things never seemed to work out.”

“So you call yourself semi retired.”

“I do,” I said flatly.

“What was going on right before the accident?”

“I went on an interview for a job at a college. It seemed like the perfect job.”

“And right before that there was another perfect job.”

“Yeah, and there was another one right after the college one, but I didn’t get any of them.”

“But you were very aggressive in your pursuit of each of them. You pushed really hard. Think you were moving too fast?”

“Absolutely not, each one of them was the perfect set up.” I paused. “Well almost, they were all full time and I was trying to sell part time.”

"Did you ever think that maybe the jobs could have been right, but the timing was off?"

"Sort of," I looked at my leg and the big white cast was on it again. "I guess it is the same old theme for me, moving too fast and/or moving too slow. I can never get the pace right."

"What other condition is the same?"

"Condition?" I scratched my head. "Well both then and now I am dealing with the idea of transformation. There is a period of transition, well there is always a period of transition," I laughed. "Change is constant." I closed my eyes briefly and the boot was back on. "Sometimes after a period of intense change you find yourself a different person."

"What you are struggling with is your expectation of transformation, and the actuality of the transformation. Sometimes they are not aligned."

"I don't read auras," I looked him in the eye as I leaned forward to take off the boot. "There's been no overnight golden dawn," I studied the foot and compared it to the other one.

"So do you expect to transform into some kind of ghost whisperer?"

I looked up and gave him a dirty look. "The right one isn't that much bigger than the left."

"You know it will never be the same."

"Neither will I," my eyes grew wide.

"Be honest," his cheeks hollowed as his lips protruded. "You can talk about expectations and reality."

"You mean actuality."

"Ok," he shrugged. "Pick a point in the journey to actuality and give me an end point, or rather," he scratched his head. "A point of transformation."

"To be really straight with you, the end point has always been about control. Psychic things have happened to me all my life, but for the most part they just happened without conscious intention. My expectations are centered around changing that theme."

"So is it control or intention?" He cocked his head. "There is a difference."

"It's intention," I nodded. "Control is more about self. Intention is more grand."

"That's good," the consultant playfully kicked the cast again. "Then there is some degree of patience, perhaps?" He smiled from ear to ear. "Seeing as how it is not just about you?"

"Well that was the issue the first time I broke my leg. I was at a point of transformation in my spiritual journey. I thought I was going to wake up one day and there would suddenly be a golden dawn, an awakening and a new understanding. I thought the work I was doing was in conflict with my spiritual desire."

"So the work you were doing was not in conflict?"

"Not at all. It was all about pace and work-life balance. After awhile I was able to manage it."

"And then what happened?"

"I came to realize that I could not remain stagnant or I would become the victim of downsizing, so I sniffed out opportunity and took on a promotion and more responsibility. The pace became more than I could handle. I did some active visualization around early retirement, and it worked."

"But it wasn't instant."

I said nothing but nodded my head.

“Tell me about the nada.”

I squirmed in my seat. “Nada makes me twitch. It is a place that I reside between visualization and reality.”

“And what is the experience?”

“Most of the time I stay focused on my visualized intentions, but sometimes I get distracted with new intentions that are shorter term.”

“And they potentially can be in conflict?”

“Yes, and they can bring about unnecessary stress.”

“So how does the broken foot contingency fit into the picture?”

“It has put me in a position to think about the preferences I have for the pace I want to maintain.”

“And the pace compliments your spiritual desire?”

I nodded in agreement.

“I need to rewind a little to the broken leg. The golden dawn didn’t happen in a way that you expected. What did happen? Was there transformation on any level?”

“Sometimes I could not escape the thought that I was doing something wrong, or that the broken leg was punishment, but those thoughts never stuck.” I paused to massage my foot. “When I healed from the broken leg the anxiety around my work began to subside. I came to the realization that I needed to finish what I started, and that I was almost done. I let go of the nada feeling and accepted where I was, knowing it would end soon, and found peace in the anticipation of an ending. In the process I opened

myself to continued learning rather than prematurely announcing that I was done.”

“And what was going on from a spiritual perspective?”

“I came to realize that I was using many of the spiritual principles that I had studied in my everyday life, including business. They became part of me, an aspect of my personality that could not be separated.” I cocked my head to look at him. “But my outward personality did not change and I continued to be soft spoken and quiet. There was nothing remote or spooky in my approach, in what I said or did, and when I asserted myself I was accepted and often respected.” I cocked my head again and gave him a sideways smirk. “Yes I used visualization techniques, and yes on occasion I used the law of assumption, but I always tried to be as selfless as possible.”

“And now?”

“Well I ended one career, started another, and then announced I was done.”

“And are you done?”

I took a moment to think. “Partly,” I announced. “And I am not saying that as a cop out. When I think about my life beyond this life, no I am absolutely not done with that career. In this life, well, I’m feeling compelled to be realistic about that journey.”

“Well it is easier to retreat to who you were rather than actively pursue becoming.”

“Truth is, I am who I was as well as what I aspire to become. In another life, who I was will become more obscure.”

“And you have learned the blessing of that.”

“I have,” I looked him in the eye. “I do need new opportunity,” I yawned. “I can’t sit still. I guess what I am looking for is balance,” I paused. “And a pace that is in harmony with my spiritual desire.”

“And your age,” he laughed. “And the expectations for golden dawn?”

“It just isn’t like that,” I shrugged. “I wish I could delete all those expectations.”

“And that is what is different from last time.”

I gave him a blank stare.

“The sincere desire to delete expectations and open yourself to actualities.”

“Imagination is the key, isn’t it?”

“Imagination is the bridge from reality to actuality.”

“And the tunnel of tumultuous emotion to pure love.” He paused. “Tell me, what gets in the way of imagination?”

“Other people’s reality, and sometimes their journey on the bridge or in the tunnel.”

“And that is both your caution and your opportunity.”

I made a funny smile.

“So you think visualization is all that is going on?”

I gave him a funny look.

“Earlier there was a comment about the nature of accidents and reference was made to conscious intentions that may not come from self. What do you think was meant by that?”

I shifted my position and leaned forward. “Work karma, group karma,” I shrugged. I was intrigued but not sure where he was going.

“You know, magic.” He looked me in the eye. “Mystical influence.”

“Later,” the boot was irritating my leg and I took it off.

“Ok,” he smiled with a shrug and motioned to kick my leg without touching it. “Think about it.”

an awareness of  
grace's opposite  
polarity  
rests  
within a crack in  
my consciousness  
like  
he  
would shall not be named  
in  
Harry Potter's world

sometimes it is a ghost of me, leaking karma that  
i created

sometimes there are entities in  
physical and astral  
realms  
playing me,  
unaware of the karma they are creating for  
themselves

*let it be*  
no don't let it be,  
savor the opportunity  
of awareness

and  
work  
the truth

magic  
isn't  
yet  
magic is

me  
in magic  
and  
you in non magic  
create  
our futures,  
and  
intentionless  
or not  
we  
influence and affect  
one another

the  
mysteries  
spin  
like  
the tale of  
the tarot

and the future unfolds  
with belief  
as well as without it



they said  
there was  
a fall

everybody said it;  
the bible,  
different religions  
and mystical  
schools

it  
was about magic and creating  
and  
being God like  
and yet within the realms of self

as the story goes, self became too self serving

and now i wonder  
about the possibility  
of a fall within a fall,  
about abandoning self love in the selfishness of  
others

## ASSUMPTION

There was a black space in between dreams and I rolled over without opening my eyes, associating the experience with being at a movie or play during intermission. I discovered a comfortable position and slipped into a rhythmical breathing pattern. Out of the darkness came a white head that reminded me of marble. I could not tell if it was a woman without hair or an androgynous young man. The statue like face moved slightly to the right and then to the left. A bright purple light emerged like a third eye in the center of her head. With the light came a welcoming smile and a clinical expression.

“What I want you do,” a voice erupted from the smile. “Is imagine a very advanced being, someone who can answer the questions you have been pondering.”

“You fit the bill,” I thought to myself. “I imagine you.”

“All right,” the third eye disappeared and the eyelashes moved as the head titled forward. “If that is what you wish.” She closed her eyes and then opened them to study me. “And now what I want you to do is become me. Allow your thought to become my thought so that we become one.”

Suddenly my rational mind kicked in. “It’s ok, it’s ok, just be open with this. Let it happen. Don’t try to control it.”

A feeling of release came over my body with a tingling sensation and I was suddenly cold. A great feeling of peace settled in my heart and radiated outward, and with it there was a warming that made the cold feeling go away. I was neither hot nor cold, yet there was a coolness around me.

“Now that you and I are one, let’s imagine ourselves being of service to someone with questions similar to the ones you have been pondering.” There was a silent pause. “How might that relationship look? Are there boundaries or parameters that you would want to establish?”

“Absolutely,” I said automatically and then remained silent as though I had forgotten what I was going to say.

“Well,” the boy like voice returned. “What about the relationship itself?”

“First there would have to be an understanding that I am of spirit and not of the flesh.”

“So,” the boy giggled. “The questioner should not have any romantic or physical desires or aspirations toward you.”

“Yeah,” I nodded. “There would have to be understanding though about love, I mean love as a natural law of the universe.”

“So you would not even respond to the questioner if they did not have this understanding.”

“Correct.”

“What about the knowledge you share. How would you manage that so there are no karmic implications for either you or the questioner?”

“Well,” there was a pause in my rhythmic breathing. “It would be a don’t ask, don’t tell kind of thing. By that I mean the questioner would be in control. I would not provide information that did not pertain to the question.”

“Is that a hard and fast rule, or would you bend a little on that?”

“Well, if the being had false information related to the question at hand I would need to deal with that.” I could feel myself frown. “You can’t build knowledge on a false foundation.”

“How would you deal with it?”

“I’d ask the person to reconsider their belief, perhaps suggest some type of research.”

“Be careful with that,” the boy’s expression changed and we morphed into a woman. “Contemplation might be a better route for the questioner.” In a flash the face was a boy again and he looked quizzically into my eyes. “What else, any parameters for you?”

“I would not interfere in this person’s life. There would be no advice, no forecasting, nothing like that.”

“Even if you saw a negative entity or influence? You would not caution the person?”

“Nope,” I shook my head in the negative and could feel myself biting my upper lip.

“So you would ignore it?”

“Well,” I hesitated. “I might do something around assumption, similar to what you are doing with me right now. If we could become one I might be able to influence him in some way.”

“Be careful with that too,” the woman gave me a compassionate smile and then became the boy. “You obviously have some gender preferences,” he giggled. “Have you noticed that it is always a he you are helping?”

I could feel myself nodding in the affirmative.

“It’s not a problem,” the boy became a woman and the giggling stopped.

“Now I want you and me to separate so that you become the questioner, but before we do this I need to ask you if this is still the image you want to work with.” The bright purple light returned to the center of the forehead and the marble like head spun in various directions without expression.

“Well given a choice,” I could feel my eyebrows rise and I became enthused. “I would like you to be me as an old man.” My mind raced for images of what I might look. “But this is a very healthy and active old man.”

“So be it,” the head stopped spinning and I slipped into a dream.

\* \* \*

There was a very old plant in my dream that had magical powers, and a family that learned how to cultivate and use it. I studied the tree and had a sense that there were generations of use and abuse, and there were also periods when there was no magic at all. I sat under the tree in a pretty garden and wore a sideways smirk. I imagined generations of the family using the tree in different ways, helping themselves and helping one another. The imagining was strained and impersonal and I thought about myself in the context of this experience. What I am I doing in this dream? What is this about? Am I really me? Am I them even though I can't imagine the detail? Suddenly I was me but I was also this family at the same time, rhythmically floating and drifting. The me part of me having the experience was one of a single soul attached to a collage of souls, constantly moving and changing position, constantly aware of the duality of being, of me and them.

“And which one are you?” A voice without a face came from nowhere.

“Huh?” I was suddenly a schoolboy with wide eyes and felt picked on.

“You want to know about magic,” the unidentified voice continued. “Is that what this is about?”

“Um,” I could feel myself nod and a feeling of release came over me. I descended from the collage into an ocean and swam to shore, then sat in the sand and watched as others descended from the collage and swam toward me.

Upon close inspection I realized they were all me at different stages of this incarnation.

“What is it you want to know about magic?” An old man that was me was surrounded by other representations of myself. At the moment I was the young schoolboy. I watched as the others formed a circle around the old man and sat down on the sand. I was the last one to sit.

“And what is it about magic that you want to know?”

“Why it's so spooky,” the schoolboy slumped down further into the sand. “Is God the only one who can make magic?” He was dressed in his Catholic school uniform; navy blue slacks tie, and jacket with a pale blue shirt. “Can the devil make magic too?”

“Everyone makes magic,” a thirty five year old man responded to the boy.

“Let's start with a definition.” The old man leaned back on his hands. “Magic is spontaneous creation that human consciousness cannot explain. It is not that it is not unexplainable, or that the laws of cause and effect do not apply, it is more a matter of comprehension. It is cause and effect that the human mind cannot fully understand or explain. The cause of all magic is thought. Everything in the material world is the by product of thought.”

“But it isn't just my thought,” a fifty year old me added. He was the only one in a bathing suit. “I make magic, and so does everyone around me in mundane as well as spiritual realms.”

“We're all just victims,” a skinny twenty year old shrugged. He was dressed in bell bottoms and a polka dot shirt with a wide brimmed hat. “We have no control.”

“And what do the rest of you think?” The old man scanned the faces that surrounded him.

“Sometimes that is true,” the fifty year old nodded in agreement. “There is some choice involved here, but there is also an element that we cannot control. It's that part that makes us feel like victims. Magic is about the mystery of cause, and with the idea of cause come all my questions.”

“Magic is mysterious because the thoughts that initiated it are frequently not easily identifiable. It is also mysterious because sometimes thoughts are not intentional, and often non intentional thought is in conflict with intentional thought on both personal as well as collective levels.” The old

man was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, and he was as thin as the 20 and 50 year old. "What do you think?" He looked at the schoolboy.

"I think there is good magic and there is bad magic. The bad magic comes from guilt; either because I feel guilty or because others feel that I am guilty."

"Like all the adults in my life," the twenty year old lit a cigarette. "And them nuns," he poked at the kid.

"Get over it," the fifty year old leaned back in imitation of the old man. "Good or bad, self directed or influenced by others, magic is the by product of thought. But thought is an interesting phenomenon. Our conscious way of thinking is consumed with words, but words are not the only way of thinking."

"Keep going with that," the thirty five year took on an inquisitive look. He was dressed in a pinstriped suit with a white shirt and red tie. His feet were bare and he pushed his heels deep into the sand and then leaned forward.

The old man smiled and was silent for a few moments before he spoke. "Words are a way of thinking, but not the only way of thinking. Human thought is consumed with words, sometimes exclusively. When I dream and meditate my thought process is very different. My experience is not composed of words. My thinking in this state can be visual, auditory or tactile. Sometimes a specific odor brings affect, feeling, and I slip into a specific mood." He paused with a broad smile. "And after the experience the words come." He paused again. "Never forget that words are auditory representations of experience, or that words bring with them the power of creation. The power of the word comes before and after experience."

The thirty five year scratched his head. "So words, sound, can bring about a particular state of consciousness."

"And they can facilitate a new state of consciousness."

"Bull," the twenty year old spit in the sand. "We are all victims. Perhaps we have some power, some control, but so much of what happens to us is beyond our control. So much of who I am and what I become is not a matter of choice."

"That is also true," the old man gave him a sideways glance and then looked directly at him. "What is it that you truly want to know?"

"Simple," the twenty year old's face relaxed. "What is in my control, and what is not?" He nodded with a half smile. "Just give me a list." He leaned way back and slowly moved forward until he was in the old man's face. "Talk about magic too. White magic. Black magic. My magic. Their magic."

A big green book fell into the twenty year old's lap and the thirty five year old's eyes grew wide as he studied the tattered cover. Both recognized it instantly. It was a collection of Shakespeare's work that they carted to class for two semesters in their junior year of college. The book opened and the pages flipped and settled on an ear marked page. It was the 'All the World is a Stage' soliloquy from 'As You Like I'. Suddenly everyone in the circle had the book in their lap and was studying the page.

"There is no more here then the simple stages of human development." The fifty year old stood up. "Freud implied the same kind of thing."

"Yeah but Freud didn't imply anything mystical." The thirty five year old circled the group like a facilitator. "Go ahead," he nodded in the direction of the old man.

"First of all I don't believe it is Shakespeare. Most of you know that there is some controversy over who really wrote the plays, and there is evidence to support that they were really written by Francis Bacon." The old man paused for a moment.

"And as you may or may not know, Francis Bacon was imperator of the Rosicrucian order."

“There is no proof that he is the author of the plays. And even if there were, so what?” The thirty five year old paced back and forth behind the circle and nodded at the fifty year old. “What is your view?”

“Well there is a difference between the stages of human development and the cycles of life. Development is more concerned about the physical, emotional and psychological stages that all humans experience. There is little deviation. There are very specific attributes associated with stages such as early childhood or old age that everyone experiences in pretty much the same way. Human cycles are greatly influenced by cosmic conditions, and there is great deviation.”

“Blah blah blah,” the twenty year kicked at the sand. “What’s the point? Get back to the soliloquy.”

The fifty year old cocked his head in the direction of the twenty year old. “This passage is about the cycles of life and it makes reference to how self generated magic begins to diminish as we get older. What do you think that is about?”

“Maybe it is a state of mind,” the kid shrugged. “I mean with accidents, it’s like I look at what happens to other people and think that it can’t happen to me. That thought has power. It protects me.”

“Until one day the accident happens to you, and then all of a sudden your thinking changes.” The thirty five year old smiled and the fifty year old nodded.

“There are also spiritual conditions and influences that change during the course of your life time.” The old man closed his eyes.

“Come on,” the twenty year old was suddenly very loud. “Stop with the riddles and talk to me.”

The old man took a deep breath and closed his eyes. “I am more than I. I assume others and others assume me.” He opened his eyes. “You believe that there are spiritual masters who help and guide you.”

“I do,” the kid was quiet.

“Use your imagination to begin an assumption process, even if there is no specific person in mind. As you form your question, keep in mind that the self is little more than a transaction, a way to another state and understanding. The answer may come quickly and directly, or it may be obscure and come to you over a series of dreams or subconscious events.”

“I’ve asked my question.”

“No one is out to get you kid. Yes there are tricksters and monsters, and they reside in both the seen and unseen worlds. Your belief gives them energy, and your fear is an invitation to bring them into your consciousness in both seen and unseen worlds.”

“So I just pretend they don’t exist?”

“Absolutely not,” the old man switched his gaze to the thirty five year old. “You have come to learn that evil is not an actuality, and yet you wrestle with realities that have evil intentions. Consider how the trickster becomes the trickster and what happens to him.”

The fifty year old bowed his head. “It comes from the realization of self and not self, of you and me, of have and have not, and the discovery that I can take from you and I can hurt you.”

“As well as the discovery that I can be hurt.” The thirty five year old kicked at the sand. “And even that I need and want to be hurt.”

“And what ultimately happens?”

“Karma bites them both in the ass,” the twenty year old said laughing.

“Don’t pre suppose your karma or confuse it with the intentions of those around you. You can think of yourself as a victim of your of situation in the world, your karma and the players that come and go in your life, or you can think of it as opportunity to progress.”

“And is it true that the only place to work it out is the physical plane?”

“Perhaps,” the old man shrugged. “I don’t know that to be true.

“The complex part,” the thirty five year old scratched his head. “Is that everyone around me is working out their stuff at the same time. We are continually creating new karma.”

“Continually playing others and being played.”

“What about influence from unseen worlds?” The twenty year old looked into the old man’s eyes. “You said there were tricksters and monsters in both seen and unseen worlds.”

“Let’s talk about positive influence instead of focusing on the negative. Imagine yourself in a cosmic place between this life and the last. You are more than who you are now because you are a collection of all your incarnations and at the same time you are also all of those around you. You reside in a world of like minds and communion. The cast of characters expands and contracts as souls depart and return from incarnations. Some depart before you, some after, and some at the same time. All of them influence you, and likewise you influence each of them.”

“It’s just not as spooky as you get older.” The fifty year old poked at the twenty year old with a smile.

“What do you mean?”

“It’s a memory thing,” the fifty year old shrugged. “When you are younger you may not remember the characters, but as you get older and you have seen some of them come and go you realize that those who have gone are still around you.”

“I don’t call to them,” the old man said defensively and his eyes grew wide. “Not consciously anyway.”

“Well if isn’t conscious and it isn’t intended, then it can be thought of as magic.”

“So if this celestial influence can be thought of as magic, so can karma, as there is so much of my own karma that I do not understand.”

The old man nodded in agreement. “What happens to me, to us, is not always our creation or intention.”

“So all this so called magic is why some of our visualizations do not play out in the real world as we visualized or expected.”

The old man continued to nod. “I have learned that before I visualize I should spend some time thinking about what I intent to create, and how harmonious it is with my destiny, and the fate I have created from the choices I have made within this incarnation.”

“Interesting,” the fifty year stood up and his eyes grew wide. “The natural laws of visualization include producing results that have no harmful impact on others, and the outcome must benefit someone other than self.” He scratched his head. “Benefiting self becomes the ultimate question.”

“There is also a plurality here that I have not adequately explained.” The old man shook his head. “The harmony is not just about self or the people in your immediate environment. There is a grander harmony with nature, the earth, and the cosmic.”

The twenty year old screwed his face into a skeptical expression. “Sounds hit or miss to me, and when I think about it’s probably more miss than hit.” He unscrewed his expression and took on a blank look. “Where do you begin?”

“You are an assumption of God, and God is love, so assume that love is the ultimate natural law. Begin there with everything you visualize.”

self  
is little more  
then a transaction

it is  
a means to another end,  
another state,  
a new understanding

grace is like extra credit  
and it comes in four flavors

the first is grace that i have earned through good  
deeds

the second flavor of grace comes from  
people i know or have known

the third is about cosmic influence,  
the grace that came with me to this incarnation

the fourth  
is also about cosmic influence.  
it is the grace that comes  
from those whom i've known  
that have returned to a cosmic plane

the third flavor diminishes  
as i grow older,  
while the first and the forth  
continue to expand

*what about the influence  
that comes from grace's opposite?  
what flavor is that?*

the flavor that comes from choice,  
opportunity

think of grace like money,  
you can earn it,  
it can be gifted to you,  
it accumulates

but  
you are not in total control of how and went it is spent



i think of myself  
as  
a cosmic  
partner  
in my  
relationship  
with God

*relationship? partner?  
how anthropomorphic can you get?*

what?

*you know what.  
you want spending control,  
that's what*

i do,  
but honestly  
it isn't just for me

*work on those analogies  
or just  
forget about them  
all together  
no wonder  
monks  
prefer silence*

i  
partner  
with the plants  
in the yard

the new ones mingle  
with the rescues  
and we share  
the bounty  
of this space

*what about the weeds?  
you rippin' um up?*

what is a weed  
but an unidentified  
life form?

*so you identify before you rescue?*

not always

*think something spiritual is going on? something about  
destiny perhaps?*

*um.  
study the dogs in the window.  
they may not have a clue about destiny,  
but they have learned about fate*

i caught a glimpse  
of the astral self  
that was  
me  
between  
this incarnation  
and the last

how  
foreign he seemed  
in the mirrors  
of consciousness,  
how far away  
his dreams, desires and fears

uncollected,  
i sit in this self  
and reflect

the journey of this self is  
embedded  
with all whom i have encountered;  
i've worn their smiles,  
even facial expressions,  
and walked their talk  
in exchange  
for my own

i study the astral  
shadow of who i was  
and invite him to a secret garden and  
museums of influence

we explore,  
lusting for integration

## SECRET GARDENS

I was on my way on my bicycle to meet a priest in a parking lot beside the ruins of an old church. As I entered the parking lot all I could see of the old church were three gables that seemed to touch the sky. It was separated from the parking lot by a huge stone wall. In front of the wall were old pews lined up like park benches. An old confessional baked in the sun, and I could see a priest opening the door and entering. I knew that was where I was to meet him, and that it was an entry point to a museum and secret gardens on the other side of the wall. I locked my bicycle to a Eucalyptus tree and when I turned around to walk toward the old confessional everything changed. I realized it wasn't an old confessional at all, it was a ticket booth. Suddenly I was surrounded by mobs of people that transformed into a huge line that zig zagged through the parking lot. I was one of the first in line.

"I think I already have a ticket," I thought to myself as I studied the ticket choices on the display in front of me. I couldn't remember if the ticket I purchased was for the museum, the garden tour, or the grand tour that included both. I fished in my bike bag and found a crumbled ticket. "This must be it." My hand slipped back into the bag, clutching the ticket.

"Excuse me," I said to the woman in front of me. "Is this the line for ticket holders?"

She yawned with a nod as I studied her hands to see if she had a ticket, and if it looked like mine.

"Ticket holders this way," a woman motioned toward a turnstile. "Insert your ticket and look up at the reader to see your color. Someone will guide you from there."

The woman in front of me inserted her ticket, and the monitor above flashed green. The second she looked at it she disappeared.

"Move along, move along."

"Ok," I said to myself as I shrugged matter of factly. "I'll give it a try."

Two people in front of me inserted their tickets, and like the woman in front of them a color appeared and the instant they looked at it they disappeared.

“Mine is stuck,” I looked at the ticket holder and a flustered expression came over her face. The ticket was half way in and I could not pull it out. “Hold on,” she signaled to a security guard who approached me with a laser that looked like a flashlight. He flashed the laser at a sensor on the ticket machine, and the ticket ejected.

“Can’t read it,” he held the ticket up to the light. “Where did you get this?”

“I don’t remember,” I said honestly. “But I know I am supposed to meet a priest here.”

“I see,” the security guard nodded. “One of the old church people,” he said studying me. “You don’t need a ticket.”

“How do I get in?”

“You’re in the wrong reality.”

“Huh?”

I found myself back at the Eucalyptus tree, facing the bike, and when I turned again I could see the confessional and a priest entering it from a door behind. I approached the front door of the confessional and entered. The little box that contained us was open to the sky and the sun streamed in. I could hear a small door slide open and I watched as the velvet curtain blew slightly upward. I could see an outline of the priest’s profile, but I could not see detail. I studied the profile for a few moments in silence.

“You start, remember?”

“Bless me father for sin is just a word, and blessing is the intention to invoke divine favor.”

The priest mumbled something in latin and then was silent for a moment. “The word sin has a great deal of baggage for you. You need not use that word. We are talking about the consequences of behavioral choices, about what we have learned about the way we have behaved and how we interacted with others.”

“I have a behavioral pattern of giving away my power and submitting to the will of others, particularly those of authority. Most upsetting in this incarnation is not listening to the small inner voice of innate spiritual knowledge and submitting to the historical will of religion.” I paused and studied the curtain. “I have come to learn that God is within me, not separate from me. Just as Christ is the child of God, so are us all. Religious law is bound by cultural parameters and politics. It is different from natural or cosmic law.

“And what is that difference?”

“The supreme natural law of the cosmos is love. Religion cannot fully embrace love because it is founded in self, and restricted by the consciousness that pervades it.”

“But haven’t you felt blessed and enriched by another’s spiritual experience?”

“Of course,” I said wishing I could see his eyes. “But I have also been deceived and sometimes hurt.” I sat in silence for a moment. “However, I find it quite ironic that when a mystical truth is about to unfold my memory finds comfort in my religious past. Look at us here now, at what I have created, the confessional, the church, you.” I continued to sit in silence for a few more minutes. “Although at times I have been hurt, I have to admit that I have also been enriched.”

“There is duality in all things. That is another cosmic law.” I could feel his smile. “You have learned to follow the God of your heart.”

“But there is always emotion in it for me. I need to just let go when an individual or an organization is in opposition to my values and beliefs.”

“And is the letting go about something current in your life, or is it routed in the past?”

“It’s all about the past,” I nodded and thought for a moment. “Actually, it is all about now. Now contains the past. I can no longer separate them. It’s like an ongoing museum of perpetual realization. Just as the now of this reality has multiple perceptual views so does actuality beyond this consciousness.”

“Tell me more.”

“Well, in reality if I am standing on railroad tracks in the direction of an approaching train I can see and hear the train coming. If I am standing in the opposite direction my perceptual experience is very different. I will still hear the train coming, but not in the same way.” I paused for a moment in thought. “Of course I will not see the train coming, but I will see something else. The same is true if I were standing in another direction, or if I were above the tracks on a bridge. Perception may not alter the experience, but it alters what and how you experience.”

“You are talking about physical perception, the senses.”

“Not necessarily,” I looked down and then up. I had an irresistible urge to pull back the curtain and stare into his eyes. “Perception is mental too. I can reflect upon an experience, and the mental alchemy of that reflection can alter my understanding of the experience.”

“And ultimately, it can change the experience. Yes?”

I could no longer resist and I pulled back the curtain. “Yes.” Bushy eyebrows expressed themselves upward and I studied the grey eyes on a face that could only be Irish. “There are gardens in the museum. That is why you are here. Where would you like to start?”

“What are my choices?”

The priest reminded me of the security guard I met earlier.

“Well,” his head turned sideways. “There are several places to visit. One is spiritual,” he cocked his head. “Another is the museum of sexual memory.” His head turned and he studied my expression. “Surprised?”

“A little,” I admitted. “But I really shouldn’t be.”

“It’s been in your dreams for some time.”

“Let’s start with the spiritual museum.”

I could hear the door of the confessional open as the priest stood up. He was tall and I watched as he ducked to pass through the doorway. I could see him standing in a garden. I exited the confessional the same way I entered, and then walked around it to where he was standing. Beside him was the old church. The windows were open spaces without glass, and all the doorways were open as well. There were scaffolds high up that surrounded the gables, suggesting that the church was under construction. As we walked toward it I could see that there were no pews inside, but the altar looked intact.

“Oh,” I was suddenly compelled to stop. What I was seeing was not in alignment with what I was feeling. “The church is empty, but there is a mass going on.” I gave the priest a confused look.

“Another reality is all,” the priest smiled and continued walking. “Let’s enter from this side.”

“I feel like a voyeur,” I announced as I followed the priest up the steps.

“Then be one.” He seemed to bounce as he walked. He reminded me of a gay friend I had in St. Croix who was a Catholic priest for many years.

The altar was long and covered in saw dust and debris. Strewn from end to end were spiritual artifacts from my distant past which included catechisms, a prayer book, and rosary beads. Further down were more recent artifacts that included numerous books and monographs.

“This isn’t just about things,” the priest pointed to a scanner. “It’s about people, their influence, their shared experience with you.”

I picked up the prayer book and placed it on a scanner. Suddenly there was a nun standing behind it. I knew she was not physically there, but rather some type of holographic projection. Her image transformed into a mini drama about practice communion that I remember well.

“You think you remember,” the priest reminded. “What you actually remember is the perceptual experience of your senses at the time, the emotional memory you attached to it.” He nodded me forward and I picked up a book.

“What about the unseen? Experiences that were thought based rather than perceptual?” I picked up a book.

“Go ahead,” the priest encouraged. “Scan it.”

A holographic cloud penetrated the center of my forehead. I was conscious of current thought, but at the same time I was conscious of my thinking at the time I read the book. “Some of this thinking is just down right wrong,” I shook my head.

“It isn’t wrong,” the priest corrected. “It’s a different perceptual understanding. Perception has a mental component too. Understanding is aligned with association to other experiences. In fact,” he paused. “There is no understanding without association.”

“I think I need to spend some time getting caught up. I need to look at my experiences with an expanded view and different associations,” I looked at the priest. “And that includes the people in my life and our influence on one another.”

“You have chosen to start with the spiritual themes of your life, yet you have already done a good deal of reflection in this area, as evidenced in your prior comments about religion. However,” he paused to study me.

“You are who you were. An expanded view and consideration of different associations will help you bridge to new understanding.”

I was suddenly reminded of a recent dream. It is a recurring theme, but this one is different. In the dream I am doing some routine thing, like making a bed, and I’m also wondering about existence on another plane and more specifically about existence that is more advanced and knowledgeable. I am relaxed in my wondering, wishing some sort of communion. I turn and there is an apparition, and a perceptual sensation that it is real. I can see it. I can hear it. Then suddenly I am screaming hysterically and my heart is pounding. The apparition is doing nothing but smiling at me. I scream and scream and my mind races with thoughts of who I can tell about the experience. The two of us are suddenly in the room talking, and the other person’s back is toward the apparition. I am telling the other person that I don’t understand why I am screaming, that there is little if anything for me to be afraid of. This is the new part of the recurring dream. In the past I didn’t consciously think about a being on another plane or any type of communion, it just happened to me. In this dream I am seeking an apparition and communion, and when it is about to happen I am afraid. The apparition stays there, and I use reasoning to tell myself that I am not afraid. And although I am truly not afraid I feel compelled to play out a drama, to react in a way that I feel I should. I continue to play it out even though I don’t believe it. That is the big difference, first the intention, then the new awareness, and then playing along anyway.

“What is the fear?”

“That what I see, what I experience with this apparition, will be opposite of what I seek. That it will deceive me, and possibly even hurt me.”

The priest urges me to step back a few paces. He points at a prayer book. It has a black plastic cover, and on one side it has a zipper where rosary beads are kept. I open the book, but it won’t stay open because of the rosary beads in the little pocket. Instead I place it on the scanner. Again the cloud comes into my head and I am working very hard to memorize prayers and the rules about communion. I am struggling to recite the Ten Commandments and can feel a ruler smack my knuckles when I get one wrong. It’s the one

about false gods. At first it has no meaning, then it is filled with meaning, and then it has no meaning again. The air around me is stale and filled with odors from the breath of nuns that were my teachers in grade school. I am scared, so scared I'm afraid I might poop my pants. I better be good or I will burn in hell forever and ever. Then I do poop my pants and I feel disgusting. Years go by and the disgust turns to anger. In time the anger turns to pity, and the pity turns into a reflection of me in a past life. I feel like a priest. There is no emotion about it, it just is.

"You're orientation is important," the priest squinted his eyes. "You can not deny who you were or even think of it in a past tense. As you said, everything is now. The twist is in the associations you make on the mental plane." His furry eyebrows rose and then he looked down. "Forget about the words in all of this," his head rose and he waved his hand at the artifacts on the counter. "Forget the intended catholic meaning and focus on the concepts, on the actuality of the ideas that the words represent and mean for you now."

I hesitated as I picked up the crucifix and put it on the scanner. "I never understood suffering." I looked at the scanner and the image seemed inconsistent with the crucifix and I was confused. What I saw was a scene from a movie. A Native American had hooks in his chest and was suspended in the air, and then the scene changed to sacrifice and a child was about to be decapitated.

"I've never really understood the idea of Christ dying for all our sins, but that is not where thought is taking me."

"Follow your heart instead of your head. What is the lesson on an emotional level?"

"There are different methods to achieve alternate consciousness. One way is to deny and taunt the physical." I shrugged. "Take it to extremes in either excess or deprivation. It involves inviting pain or discomfort and then overcoming it."

"Do you think one can achieve an altered consciousness in this way?"

"One can," I laughed. "But not this one," I shook my head. "I have never been on that page."

I looked at the screen above the scanner and saw myself sitting in a circle with sweaty people, choking from the thick smoke. "Just not my path," I shrugged. "I guess I am just more cerebral." I felt the pain in my ears and remembered the blister on my eardrum that resulted from changes in altitude that were too sudden for me, and my allergic reactions to burning juniper and thick smoke. "Funny how the body responds when you are not in alignment with your values."

I watched the screen above the scanner as it played back a discussion about forgiveness with a Native American. For him, to be forgiving is to be naïve and down right stupid. At that moment I was grateful for my Christian heritage, and realized I had made some pretty outrageous assumptions about the spiritual values of others. Many cultures expand the concept of self to include their families, their clan, their tribe. It is a transcendence from me to us against them, the outsiders, those who are threatening and at the same time less than us. War comes from a need for protection. Some say they love their enemy. Yes, love them so much that the irreverent 'I' needs to make them just like me.

"What are you doing?"

"Huh?" I looked at the priest and then at the mirror on the altar. I saw that I was standing in a basic tai chi posture, my arms swinging left to right. The ying yank energy brought me balance. "Oh," I relaxed and stood up straight. "I never thought of the marital arts as coming from divine energy."

"The self is always in need of protection, both mental and physical."

"Well," I cracked my knuckles and was about to sit in front of the scanner.

"No, continue in that movement as you explore more of the artifacts."

I continue to sway and several concepts emerge that have their roots in my Catholic past. The first one is about penance, and I see myself kneeling before a dark altar on the screen above the scanner. I am chanting hail Mary's and the image shifts to me looking out a window on stormy day. Several library books are piled on the table beside me, and the top one is by Herman Hesse.

"Penance and karma are similar ideas, but neither truly define the concept." I stop swaying and sit on the floor, which is several feet from the scanner and three steps above me on the altar. "Our choices, actions, and behaviors have consequences on the people and world around us. Penance implies that compensation can be self directed as well as dictated by another. I feel better talking to someone rather than talking to myself. What a gift it can be when you can confide in another person, particularly when the other person radiates love." I stared at the priest. "How rare that truly is in the world of religion. Dogma always gets in the way. My issue with the penance approach to compensation is that there are too many possibilities for error and they can lead to psychological issues for both the dictator and the dictated."

I looked down.

"Prayer is a method of meditation, visualization and magic that has worked well for me."

I looked up and stared at the priest. "I believe that forgiveness is Christianity's greatest gift to humanity. At the core of this concept is the idea that in essence we are one."

"So forgiveness erases karma?"

I shrugged. "It certainly has the power to alter consequences." I looked down and then up. "And there is another link to a Catholic concept with yet another twist. It is the idea of atonement. My memory of the concept brings up the idea of Christ making atonement for the sins of humanity. I don't know that my memory is accurate in any way," I pursed my lips and

poked the lower lip with my forefinger. "But that is not important. What is important is the idea of reconciliation on a very personal level."

I closed my eyes and opened them. "The difficult shift was reincarnation. The church did not talk about it at all, and in my little boy Catholic head the thought of reincarnation was as barbaric and repulsive as the idea of cannibalism."

A paperback book with the cover ripped off suddenly appeared on the screen and there was a knot in my stomach as I remembered my first thoughts about the possibility of reincarnation. I shook my head and closed my eyes, and when I opened them another book was on the scanner. It was 'Siddhartha' by Herman Hesse.

"Why did Christianity turn it's back on the concept?" My shoulders came up and I looked at the priest with a feeling of being tricked. "They took away the concept of reincarnation and replaced it with resurrection, and with the idea of a last judgment and all that atonement stuff."

"Be careful with the anger," the priest's eyes were penetrating. "With your thoughts of they and them."

"I know," I bowed my head. "I was one of them in another life. I know that." I could feel tears welling up but I refused to release them. "I have to say though, that the feeling in this life when I was exploring the possibility of reincarnation was one of being deceived, and then of being abandoned. I had no recollection of being a priest."

"There were sparks of memory." I could see myself on the screen above the scanner as a high school boy conducting a séance. "Some of it tripped up with imagination."

"Psychic experiences sometimes leave me empty, wanting more, and questioning what I experienced and what it means. Reflection and thought bring me to a place of possibility, to the bridge of what could be."



"It's human. It's all about association, that's the way the mind works." The priest closed his eyes and opened them. "And when there is little association, imagination is only natural." He pointed a finger at the high school boy on the screen. "Imagination has karma too," he winked. "Remember that thought is real."

"But real is not always true," I tried to wink back and then remembered that I did not know how to wink. One eye could never make a move without the other imitating it.

The priest nodded.

"Back then the thought of reincarnation was about loosening identity and becoming someone else. The thought was horrifying." I shrugged again and looked down. "I overcame that fear and with it went a lot of my fears about death," I looked up. "But another one quickly replaced it. It was the thought of who I would become, and of utmost importance was the possibility of losing whatever progress I had made through the succession of past lives." I studied his eyes and played back his empathic expression."

"I believe that if you could witness and analyze your past lives, you would come to the conclusion that your progress, your understanding of the cosmic, is greater with each one." He wore my look of grief and burst out in a smile. "It's all part of the grand design."

A diagram appeared on the screen above the scanner. It was a circle of circles representing the succession of lives as an expression of soul personality. In the center of the circles is a circle of light. The circles move clockwise. The first circle is dark, and each circle after it is progressively lighter. I study the space between the darkest circles. "Some would call that purgatory." I pointed to the space. "Another Christian concept that I sort of like," I shook my head. "It makes sense."

On the scanner was another book. The picture above it was my memory of Dante's inferno, a stairway that descended into a hell of progressive levels. I was sliding down steps of ice that were surrounded by flames and I had to look away.

"Hell is," the priest hesitated. "But it isn't forever."

"I can recollect a couple of nuns that preached otherwise." I cocked my head and gave the priest a sideways glance. "Sure can keep people in line though," I shook my head. "And the way my memory plays back the story, at the end of time purgatory goes away. The final judgment brings you to either heaven or hell, that's it." I looked him in the eye. "You know, I mean after the resurrection."

The priest squinted and then was silent for a moment. "A little truth, a little reflection, a series of questions about what it means." He attempted to wink but his eyes mimicked mine and they both winked at the same time. "If there is no association, there is an open invitation to imagination."

A song from the Temptations filled the space around us. "Just my imagination, running away with me, oh I tell you it was just my imagination, running away with me."

"I am not even going to speculate about the karma associated with all of that," I shook my head looked down again. "The most transitional concept for me in this life, and one that I am working through right now, is about energy. It's related to the impact that imagination has upon others, like the collective Christian imagination, but it's more than that." I looked up. "It's about the energy that comes from behavior, both collective and individual. It is about Grace, and grace's opposite. It's an out of the box energy, the box being self, that has influence over what happens to us in our everyday life." I scratched my head. "There is something about my Catholic background that brings me comfort when I explore the possibilities of grace."

I looked up and thought I was done, but there was another book on the scanner. An image of Timothy Leary popped into my head and I was flooded with thoughts of alternate consciousness. In my fifteen year old head there were so many possibilities, and they were all in conflict with my current thinking.

"Stay with the idea of chemical substance."

It was difficult for me to stay focused. "He is no different from the religious dictators, tripped up by fate and the consequences of their past." I squinted and studied the priest. "Do you know that his graduate students were required to take substance? He even told them that if they were too square to take it, then they probably weren't cut out to be clinical psychologists anyway." I started laughing. "Reminds me of the journey to shamanhood that I've heard a couple of native Americans preach."

"What's behind the idea?" His voice was soft.

His voice was sobering and encouraged me to back out of the angry dramas that were playing in my head. "There is a natural chemical process that takes place in the body during meditation," I paused in thought. "It is the by product of initiation on a mental plane. I can feel it. It builds. By that I mean it is cumulative." I paused again. "All these years of mystical study, reflection and meditation have had physical and mental consequences." I looked at the priest. "And there are transition points." I looked at down. "I am in one now."

The priest sighed and his eyebrows rose. "Are you implying that enlightenment is a chemical process?"

"I am." I looked into his eyes. "However, it can be very dangerous to introduce substance to this very natural chemical process. It can be even more dangerous to take on ritual and carry the expectations of others, or to follow their path when you know it is not a way of truth for you." I looked down. "The earth is such a lonely place. You come in alone, yet with a remote sense that you are connected and beyond self. The connectedness is love, the universal law of the cosmos, and yet you drift unattached and attached to others on their journey. Each attachment ends in the mundane world, and the self that came into this world alone goes out alone."

"Tell me the line that is rambling through your head from Les Mis."

"To love another person is to see the face of God."

"Relationships are the essence of the alchemy. Desire and passion are important components in the unfolding and evolution of self." The priest smiled with his head down. He then raised his head and it cocked to the right. "Ready to explore the museum of sexual memory?"

\* \* \*

"Sexuality is our ticket to the drama that is life."

"Jerry?" I asked as we walked out of the church. "What happened to the priest outfit?"

He laughed with a broad smile and didn't say anything.

Although he wasn't dressed like a priest, he had the aura of a priest. His gentle demeanor, tone and body language suggested many years of spiritual study.

"I gave it up," he shrugged as his ear ring sparkled in the dazzling afternoon sun. "Too many conflicts in spiritual values. I was not in the same place with the people around me."

"So it wasn't about sexual desire?" I could not help but study him. He looked so different. He was much thinner, and his upper body was very muscular. The bushy eyebrows were plucked, and a healthy tan replaced the pale white skin.

"Some of it was but I didn't know it," he looked down. "I'd led a very sheltered life until I left the church." He looked me square in the eye. "And yes until that point I was celibate."

I could not deny that I was attracted to this man, and I let myself go with that thought for a moment.

"Ticket?"

I was standing at a ticket machine again, and a security guard was standing too close for comfort.

“It’s stuck in the machine.”

“You again,” his hot breath assaulted my nostrils. “Stay in the right reality or make a choice about your flavor of denial.” He looked into my eyes and then away. “There,” he pointed at the church in the distance. I struggled to see and when he saw me squinting he wiggled his forefinger as though it were some type of zoom mechanism, and I could see a group of monks sitting silently around a large rectangular table. “Or there,” I followed his finger in the opposite direction. Another group of men were sitting around a similar table. I could see their lips move so I knew they were talking. I turned to look at the security guard and suddenly I could hear them talking. It was a therapy group for sexual compulsives.

“No no,” I shook my head back and forth several times. “Neither of those will do. How do I get back to the reality track I was on?”

“Focus,” his body relaxed and his eyes closed.

“Like I was saying, sexuality is our ticket to the drama that is life.” Jerry was walking away from the church toward a bridge that was a short distance, and I was walking beside him. He turned up the collar on a short white beach robe, then looked toward me. “You can trump it but to deny it means denying the learning that comes from the characters that attract you, and that you attract.”

“Where are we going?” I looked down and then at Jerry. “I have to admit that attraction is what motivates me to be social. Without it, I would be a hermit.”

“Or a monk,” he laughed. “We are headed to the beach,” he paused to look at me. “Not that a lifetime of reflection doesn’t have its benefits, it does, but life time after life time, well for me it became an escape.” He laughed again. “You will like this beach,” he said with a nod. “A most appropriate

location for this type of museum.” He cocked his head in my direction. “I think you will agree.”

What looked like a huge sand castle up ahead turned out to be a real castle.

“We will begin our tour at the observation deck.” Jerry pointed at the castle. “Spectacular views.”

We sat on the stone wall of a deck that overlooked the beach.

“It’s a degree of hunger that keeps you thin, isn’t it?”

“Oh yes.” Jerry nodded. “I see you have learned that lesson too.”

“I think it is true with everything physical.”

“Well we are dual beings. We are a soul possessed of a body.”

“Sometimes it seems as though they are in conflict, but in actuality they inspire one another.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well remember earlier when I was talking about ways to experience alternate consciousness? There are physical ways to get there,” I shrugged. “You know, taunt, deny, excess.”

“And I think you are right on that,” Jerry leaned back on one arm. “Celibacy falls into that realm.” He looked up and then turned in my direction. “The thing with celibacy that most people do not understand is that it doesn’t need to be a lifetime commitment.”

“Sad how the religious twist things.” I looked down and focused straight ahead. “I don’t think of celibacy as a way to achieve a different perspective of consciousness, but I do think there is a link, particularly to creativity and new ways of thinking.”

“Hmm, we’ll talk more about that as we explore the museum.” He sat up straight. “What do you notice when you look around at the beach?”

“Well I cannot see faces,” I scratched my head and stood up to look. “But it looks as though there are a lot of people here.”

“Let’s take a walk.”

As we strolled the beach I came to realize that there were no people immediately around us, only in the distance. This continued as we walked further, and I realized that the beach was arranged in sections. Even though there were no people nearby, there were artifacts. We approached a section that reminded me of the 1960’s. I could see an English racing bicycle lying in the sand up ahead. As we walked toward it I noticed an army blanket and a rather large transistor radio.

“I remember that radio!” I could feel my forehead wrinkle as I imagined myself rolling the dial to Murray the K and the Swinging Soiree. Suddenly ‘Louie Louie’ was blaring in our direction. “How appropriate,” I laughed as we approached the blanket.

“Were you one of those kids that played the song at a slower speed so you could decode the true lyrics?”

“Of course, and in my circle we each had a different interpretation.”

I laughed. “Do you know that the contagious rumors about that song sparked the FBI to conduct a thirty month investigation?” I sat on the blanket and motioned to Jerry to sit. “How outrageous is that?”

“The idea of obscenity thrilled you as a teenager. Why?”

“It wasn’t really sexual,” I admitted. “It was more about rebellion, you know, challenging authority.”

“You can’t really legislate morality, can you?”

“Perhaps not, but on a personal level you can beat yourself up over it.”

“I did that too,” Jerry looked away. “The gay aspect of my personality made it even worse.” He looked at me. “I have to admit that there was some motivation in all of that thinking that encouraged me to pursue the priesthood.”

“I have to admit that I toyed with the idea as a young child, with becoming a priest that is.” I leaned back on my hands. “Gay isn’t the big mystery for me, as in how we get that way, the mystery for me is about attraction. What is it that makes some people alluring and attractive, and others either repulsive or empty?”

“You don’t want to know, not on a conscious level anyway,” he gave me a side ways glance and his dimples glistened in the sun. “Drama,” he shook his head and his eyes grew wide. “The need to rewind and play again.”

“Sometimes it isn’t a rewind, it’s a new creation.”

“But there is a seed of expectation, and more importantly, a need that has to be explored.”

“I have found that sexual drive opens the door for drama to begin.”

“A vow of celibacy can be quite convenient. It gave me permission to say no to the drama.” The dimples disappeared and he looked down at the blanket.

“The interesting thing for me about the dramas, once they unfold they have little if anything to do with sexuality.”

“The parade is about to begin.”

“Huh?” The people in the distance stood up and walked toward the water.

”They are lining up. This section of the beach takes us to the late 1960’s.”

“But I didn’t do anything, I mean hardly.” I screwed my face into a confused expression. “This makes no sense.”

“Attraction is not synonymous with action.” Jerry smiled and the dimples returned.

“Look at them all!” I declared as I folded my arms. “What am I suppose to do with this?”

“Put on the anyalst hat,” he winked. “As they pass you by, look for trends.”

The procession began and I sat there with my mouth open as they marched past. They were movie stars, politicians and public people. “This isn’t real,” I thought and chuckled to myself. “I didn’t personally know any of these people.”

“These are the players that set the stage. The models, so to speak, that established the benchmarks of attraction.” He turned to look me in the eye. “They represent the range of possibility.”

As the parade continued the players became more personal. There were teachers, neighbors, people that really existed in my little world.

“Notice any trends?”

“Not that I care to discuss.”

“Ok,” Jerry looked away.

“You know I had this client once that liked to sniff women’s underwear. I had to write a behavior plan for him, and man was that tough.”

“Why?”

“Why was it tough or why did I write it?”

“Why was there a need for a behavior plan?”

“Because there was one girl’s underwear in particular that he liked to sniff. He would actually go through her laundry to find it.”

“So what happened?”

“Well, she caught him in the act, I mean sniffing and doing his thing. Then she complained, and I was commissioned to do something about it.”

“Think about the parade of characters that marched before us. Did you offend anyone? Did you use power or engage in any activity that was not consensual?”

“No,” I laughed and then looked him in the eyes. “There were only a couple of activities, and they were pretty empty when I think back on it.”

“So there was no harm, physical or emotional, that was inflicted on anyone.” He put a finger to his lips. “By either thought or action?”

“No, absolutely not.” I gave him a sober look.

And what about you? Were you harmed in any way?”

“Harmed?” I shook my head. “No, but my expectations were different from the reality.”

“The destiny you created between lives provides you with opportunity to realign expectations and move on.”

“Or you can tell yourself that you need to keep searching, that the expectation you want is out there and you just need to look harder.” I gave Jerry a blank look.

“What’s on that island?” I stood up and pointed. “It doesn’t look far, and it looks as though there are people there.”

“Contagion.”

“I don’t understand.”

“There are people who repeatedly play out failed expectations, their drama is contagious.”

“I think I’ve been there, but very briefly.” I sat back down. “My periods of being a single man were very brief, and I am extremely grateful for that.”

I closed my eyes and when I opened them I was on the island, sitting alone. “Jerry?” I looked around but he was not there. “Oh well,” I shrugged. A man was sitting across from me on a lawn chair. I nodded and felt uncomfortable when he did not nod back, and I decided to take a walk. More and more people seemed to litter the beach as I continued to walk. I began to recognize the faces. They were all one night stands.

“It really was contagious,” I said to myself as I continued to walk. I remembered my humanity being dismissed in conversations, and then I remember dismissing. A scene played back in my head. I was telling someone that I didn’t want his name and number.

“Play it back a little further,” a voice clicked in my head.

“Oh,” I said to myself as I continued walking. I remembered the night before. The same exact thing had happened to me.

A cloud passed in front of the sun and it was suddenly cooler. Ahead of me was another cloud, and it was descending. I continued to walk toward it and then felt as though I were walking thru it. “There is a presence here.” I stopped and closed my eyes.

“Do you remember the disappointment?”

I opened my eyes, and although there was still no one there I continued to feel a presence.

“Sexual experience is not one of cognition.” I said to no one.

“No, but there is a mental aspect.”

“So much of my experience begins on a mental plane.”

“What were those first few expectations about?”

“I was expecting something astral,” I kicked at the sand. “I feel like such a jerk. I actually remember talking about it.” I continued to walk ahead slowly. “I was anticipating some kind of communion.”

“You were remembering some type of communion.”

“There was always this conflict between sex and God.”

“But God is part of everyone.”

“On an emotional level I confused sex on the physical plane with communion on an astral plane.” I looked for a face but could not find one.

“Past loves, future lives.”

There was silence for a moment as I thought.

“Future lives, past loves.”

“What does that mean?”

Suddenly I remembered the toast I gave at a childhood friend’s wedding. It was about saying yes. We have expectations about our experiences, about the people that come into our lives. Sometimes they don’t feel right and it is important to reject them. Sometimes they are not quite right but we say yes anyway.

“They never feel completely right.”

“And what has been your experience in saying yes?”

“It’s brought me opportunity.”

“And?”

“Well there is a communion of sorts. Love brings an opportunity to wear another’s expression, use their body language, see the world through their eyes.”

“Like you said earlier, sexual attraction opens a door to the drama that is life.”

“Sexuality isn’t the only door. Relationships of all kinds open doors.”

“Yes. Ultimately it is love that opens the door. To love another person is truly to see the face of God.”

The cloud lifted and the sun was shining and bright. I continued walking, studying the faces as I went. “Sometimes we just can’t let love in.”

“But it isn’t always about love.” Jerry seemed to come out of nowhere. “When you talked about expectations you described them as not right and not quite right.”

Jerry was headed in the direction of the footbridge that lead us to the island. I followed behind and then caught up to walk beside him.

“You insinuated,” he paused to look at me. “That sometimes saying no is the appropriate thing to do. Talk to me about that.”

“Well I don’t agree with the comment you made about it not always being about love. I think it is always about love. In the case of saying no, it is about self love.” I looked at Jerry as we began our march across the bridge. “There is threat and harm in the mundane world. It’s bundled into the feature we call self.”

“So do you separate yourself from everyone who can do you harm?”

“I use to think that was the approach,” I smiled and then looked down. “I’ve come to realize that there is another way, and that is one of service. Service is impersonal. To be truly effective, both to self and the one to whom service is directed, there should be no relationship.”

“Sounds cold.” Jerry frowned and we stepped off the footbridge and began the trek across the beach. “Is there anywhere else in this museum that you would like to visit?”

“Not really,” I shook my head.

“How do you think attraction works in the mundane world?”

“Like attracts unlike,” I shrugged. “At least from an atomic perspective.” Jerry was walking faster and I picked up my pace to keep up with him. “But like also attracts like.” A word he used earlier came to mind. “Contagion,” I gave him a puzzled look. “As others do to us, we do to others.”

“But what is it that attraction does for us, whether positive or negative?”

We approached the second footbridge that led to the parking lot, the church and the old confessional.

“It does come back to like attracts unlike, doesn’t it?” I paused for moment and Jerry slowed his pace. “Ultimately, attraction brings us to a place where we experience beyond self.”

“We not only experience it,” Jerry said as he stood at the entrance to the bridge waiting for me. “We integrate it.”

I was silent as we marched across the bridge toward the confessional in the parking lot.



“And what,” Jerry stood in the parking lot between the church and the confessional. “And whom,” he smiled. “Have you integrated from the experiences in this incarnation?”

Faces and features and expressions flashed through my head. “And who am I now?” I needed to let this video in my head continue. I looked at the confessional and was tempted to enter and reflect in meditation, but instead I approached the church. From the top step of the church I could see the Eucalyptus tree and my bicycle, and the confessional again looked like a ticket booth. A crowd of people formed lines in front of it. I entered the church and sat in front of the altar, but when I closed my eyes I again became one of the people in line.

here in my purgatory of dreams  
i  
step from the box of self  
into the great  
beyond that  
is not so  
beyond,  
only the beyond of the recent past

i am  
all the players,  
every one,  
reliving the experience of me

and we are stuck  
sometimes  
in silly and sad and the range of emotions,  
in places and situations  
that are mostly nonsense

yet they  
carry a theme  
and talk to me

*and when you are done?*

you mean truly done,  
not just awakened?

*well, then you have been reborn*

me is forever evolving to not me

i can be you  
and you can be me  
sometimes

sometimes, sometimes

until there is no more me  
and no more you,  
just two new blends  
communing  
with a breed of blends

us.  
drifting in the experience of  
an unknown verb  
that reminds me of love making  
in the physical world.  
hmm. memory in tact,  
new selves  
create  
new destinities

and yes,  
it happens here in the mundane too,  
with broken memory  
we ask

who am i now?

to say i don't trust reality is like saying i don't trust  
the senses, only worse

only half of reality is perceptually based;  
the rest is made up  
by a lonely brain  
that fills in  
whenever a vision  
or sensual experience  
is hazy

reality is all about association.  
what could be  
is little more than what was

...and how i feel about it

*and the corresponding psychic senses?*

when memory acknowledges experience  
in full or part  
it's the same deal,  
as the insight the psychic senses bring  
requires association  
and interpretation  
by a physical brain in a physical body

*and when the experiences are forgotten or  
ignored?*

it becomes subconscious data  
in waiting,  
but when explored it's the same deal...  
association, personal interpretation

...all on the journey to transform relative truth

## SEARCHING FOR GOLD

“Are you one of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence?”

“No. You know me.” Her hot breath found its way to my nostrils and I looked away.

“You hurt me.”

“And you hurt me,” the crucifix swung from the rosary chain that draped her waist as she approached me. “Every time you tell those stories about me.” Her eyes were penetrating as she approached.

“Something about karma.”

“And what do you know about karma?”

“There is a karmic aura around you that I didn’t understand until now.”

She turned to walk away and then turned back toward me again. “This isn’t something I did to offend you, is it?”

“Oh no,” I said apologetically. “Actually it isn’t about you personally at all.”

“Oh,” the nun’s expression was transformed from anger to curiosity. “Then what is it about?”

“It’s about collective karma.” I looked into her eyes and then I looked over her head.

“What? What startled you?” The nun was defensive.

I could feel my eyes grow wide. “You are not who I thought you were.”

Her eyes changed from brown to piercing green, and her complexion from a jaundice yellow to fair skinned and freckled.

“You have given me permission to be them all, at least all of them within the realm of your experience.” She adjusted her collar. “Well that’s done, so we can begin.”

“Begin what?”

“Our discussion about this karmic aura,” she laughed playfully. “Tell me what you are perceiving psychically.”

“You are really three nuns. One is faithful but nervous, and is perpetually in search of permission. She questions her worthiness and is apologetic in her approach toward life. Another is devoted but explosive. She is courageous and both a victim and a victimizer. An angry curiosity pushes her forward. The third is scholarly and kind. She is empathic and has a magical effect with all whom she meets.”

“And which one generates the most good karma?”

“Well the third of course.”

“Tell me about the previous dream.”

“I had a chance to peek into a book. At first I was consumed by a feeling that I should not be looking at the book, almost as though I wasn’t worthy, and then all of a sudden I was worthy for just an instant. I remember seeing numbers. They were 70 and 30.”

“What did the numbers represent?”

“It was about karma. 70% of our species generate karma that is not favorable.”

“Are you sure that is what it said?” Her eyebrows furled and then squinted and became motionless. “Wasn’t it more about tendency?”

"I am not sure," I said flatly. "The idea was about an evolutionary era, and the split was 70/30."

"And what was the era?"

"That's the part that is not clear. I think it was now, but now was shaded by that cosmic idea that everything is in the now." I gave her a puzzled look.

"Bring yourself back to the mundane perspective of past, present and future." She wore the eyes of the magical nun. "What do you think it means?"

"Well there was a transformational element to it. It was about a shift, about moving from one era to another." I looked directly into her eyes. "I think we are

moving into a new era."

"Did you see numbers for the new era?"

I shook my head in the negative.

"In the dream you were searching for gold, but the gold was metaphorical. What you were really looking for was information. Why?"

"So I could make my own gold," I said apologetically and bowed my head.

"What?" The face of the angry nun emerged from the eyes of the magical nun. "What makes you think you could ever create gold?" She asked in a rage and shook her head. "And don't answer that," a crooked finger waved in my face. "Only the good splits create gold."

"What is a good split?"

"Better than 30," she looked me up and down. "It's marked on a reverse curve. A 30 is a 'C'."

"And what I am?"

"You are probably one of those 80 20 people," the finger waved again. "I know your type, nothing more than a 'D'."

"Can a 'D' become a 'C'?" I asked curiously.

The angry nun became the nervous and doubtful nun. "If you believe," she said in a whisper and looked both ways. "If you are faithful and you follow the rules, then yes you can become a 'C'."

"Well if I can become a 'C' then I can aspire to even higher. Is that true?"

She covered her mouth with an open palm. "Well, yes." She removed her hand. "But this is not about achievement."

"It sounds as if you believe that it is about faith."

"Not the kind of faith that you are thinking," she attempted to look at me but could not make eye contact. "It goes beyond belief. It is knowing from within that the karma you are creating is positive." Her eyes danced upward and side to side. "You know because there is no conflicting desire."

"It's at that point that you can make gold?"

She hesitated and closed her eyes. When they opened the magical nun returned.

"You have been very good with visualization, with bringing things into your life." A forefinger tapped at her chin. "But sometimes there are surprises." She stopped tapping and the finger rested calmly on her chin. "Why do you think that is so?"

"Sometimes there is a conflict in my thought process. I never seem to realize it until after the visualization is manifested." I stood in silence for a moment. "It is the 30 part of my personality that makes it possible, isn't it?"

"Numbers are an indication, but they don't tell the whole story."

"I have always had an issue with numbers, particularly with averages and trends." I scratched my head. "Probability is the key. And probability has individuality at its core."

"So assume for a moment that 70/30 is the norm for this cycle of incarnation." A finger pointed in the air. "And also assume that there is a transition model. At one end of the spectrum there are people significantly below 70/30, and at the end of the spectrum there are people significantly higher." The pointing finger descended and rested in the center of her chest. "However there are thresholds. What they are is not relevant to our discussion here, but the point is that an individual can only go so high or so low."

"But there are exceptions in the model," I smiled. "A small minority transcend the thresholds. "True?"

"Yes," she paced for a few seconds and then stopped.

I cocked my head. "And that is when the thresholds shift?"

"Yes," her eyes opened and closed and there was a slight laugh. "You are assuming that this small minority grows, and correctly so. And yes we are at a transitional point when our species will evolve to a new threshold." She pulled at an ear lobe. "And that was essentially the essence of the dream. Yes?"

I smiled but said nothing.

"There is something you should know to prevent assumptions that could lead you down the wrong path. We are working in a progressive model. That means that the bottom threshold is fixed. The intention of the model is evolution, not devolution."

"I had that feeling." I scratched my head. "I was going to ask for confirmation."

"Back to your point about individuation." She clasped her hands as if in prayer. "None of this has any true meaning if you can not personalize it. "She

cocked her head and studied me. "Assume again that the norm is 70/30." She was silent for a moment. "Where would you plot yourself against that norm?" Her hands separated and one rose with a forefinger pointed upward. She pressed the forefinger against her lips, signaling me not to speak. "I am not looking for you to answer that." The finger fell again to the center of her chest. "Something to contemplate," she whispered. "Those evasive conflicts will come to mind when you do."

"Conflict can also be the reason for stagnation. Isn't that true?"

The eyes of the angry nun returned. "Well of course," she slowly twisted her head like the wicked witch of the west and her jaw wrinkled. "Let those evasive conflicts sliver from the unconscious like worms devouring a carcass." She wiggled her crooked fingers like worms. "You are so unworthy."

"Aren't we all," I leaned forward and pulled on the crucifix that hung at her side. "Nice to have a constant reminder." My thumb fingered the crucifix and I felt little spikes where the hands of Christ were stretched on the edges of cross. "But you don't really believe that being unworthy is a full time condition, do you?"

She pursed her lips and gave me a half way nod. "It is only with the grace of God." she said and completed the nod. "That we are saved."

I gave her a blank look and then looked over her head and into space.

The angry nun's face melted to become the nervous and doubtful nun. "You should be afraid, very afraid." Her head wiggled back and forth very quickly. "Ask for forgiveness, ask for grace."

"I think you have something there about forgiveness. Forgiveness brings about atonement, and with atonement can come grace for the foregiver." I tilted my head slightly. "It isn't God that you ask for forgiveness," I shook my head in the negative. "It is those whom you have offended."

"So you probably believe that grace is earned." She said quietly.

“Earned or acquired in some way, yes.”

“What impact does that have on visualization and magic?” The mystical nun returned with a smile.

“Oh,” I was startled. “Well I guess it’s like a catalyst, isn’t it?”

“Absolutely,” her eyes closed and opened. “And what about karma?”

“Karma and grace are closely aligned, and I suppose they can be thought of as one.” I touched my upper lip with a forefinger. “However, I prefer to separate them because I think of grace as the consequence of karma. But,” I hesitated and tapped lightly on the lip. Grace is only one consequence. The other consequence is transgression.”

“All right,” she nodded. “So what affect does karma have on visualization and magic?”

“Well the grace part I answered.” I flipped a hand and displayed my palm. “That is very positive.” I flipped the hand to the other side and my fingers arched upward. “But if the consequence of grace is transgression, well, then the magic will not work, or at least it will not work in a way that was intended.”

“There is something else about grace,” the knuckle of her forefinger poked at her throat. “Grace isn’t just karmic, not in the way you described.” She swallowed and both hands fell to her sides. “Grace is love from known and unknown sources.”

I gave her a puzzled look.

“Go back to that 70/30 model for a moment. What do you think our world would be like if 70% of the time we behaved in a way that generated transgression instead of grace?”

“Pretty gloomy,” I rocked side to side like a kid.

“Grace is also influence from the cosmic, from both known and unknown beings. The unknown are beings who come into this world with us to protect us, to help us make the right choices.” She looked away and then looked into my eyes. “Their influence wanes as we get older, but it is replaced by the karmic grace that we created in this life.”

“And the unknown may not be truly unknown, I mean they may just not be remembered.”

She gave me a partial and indifferent shrug.

“So it is true that I accumulate grace.” I cocked my head to one side and studied her expressionless face.

The face puckered and she looked at me as though she knew what I was thinking. A finger popped up and pointed at me. “It’s not like a 401K.” She covered her mouth and laughed, then dropped her hand and her face sobered. “You spend some in making magic,” She cocked her head in imitation of me. “And,” her hand touched her heart. “You give away what you don’t need.”

“And that desire to give away,” I cocked my head in the opposite direction. “Comes from the 30 part of who we are becoming.”

“Forgive me now?” The magical nun became a nun from my childhood.

“You know I have forgiven you,” I could not help but study her. She looked so short and frail. “You have heard me. I know you have.”

She nodded slowly and said nothing.

“But you still look like one of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.”

“It’s intentional.” She closed her eyes. “Satire is not only funny.” Her eyes opened. “It gives us the freedom to filter in more light.”

there are  
some partners in magic  
i know very well,  
so well  
that their identities  
have become part of  
my identity

i  
sense their grace and feel it's impact  
on so much of what comes into my life

*and the unknown partners?*

they are always present yet distant,  
like  
old friends and family  
that are out of touch

*and conflict?*

i thought it was desire,  
conscious and subconscious,  
but it is also about behavior

*think bigger*

it includes conflicted thoughts

*and what about conflict  
with they and them,  
the unseen forces*

if they are truly unknown, what can i know?

in the twilight stream of borderline consciousness  
becoming  
and became  
run parallel,  
like  
the imaginary distance between me and you

nature vs nurture  
becomes nature and nurture  
in no discernable sequence,  
without relevance or consequence

there is no sin in heaven.

we, consequently,  
are a natural law  
evolving to a new threshold  
in our invitation  
to become one another

we transition to a new realization  
of how our thoughts and actions  
impact us and them, them and us, specie and  
environment

to such a degree  
that the right choice of thought and behavior  
will become as automatic as breathing



## ESSAY: MAGIC IN THE MUNDANE WORLD

Often it seems that things just happen at random, without reason or intention. At other times we are very intentional in our approach toward life, and we use the power of thought to plan and visualize what we want. Often the things we want come into our lives like magic. At other times, however, our inner desires are in conflict with our conscious intentions. What we desire sometimes lies seemingly dormant in the subconscious as we unconsciously attract that which we unknowingly want or need to experience. When this happens, what actually manifests may be quite a surprise and often disappointing.

We create our own reality both subconsciously and consciously, whether intentional or not. Conscious intentions become manifest through planning, imagination and detailed visualization. There are natural, cosmic laws that govern our manifestations and the magic we bring into the mundane world. They involve harmony. There are several aspects to the cosmic laws involving harmony, they include: the destiny we created in between lives concerning our present incarnation, the personal karma that we created in this and previous incarnations, and the collective karma concerning other beings and the world around us.

Thought and behavior create karma. Karma can be thought of as the consequence to self that comes about as a result of our thoughts and actions. Some prefer to label these consequences as good karma and bad karma. However, good and bad are relative terms. They require a personal, emotional judgment as what may be good karma for one might not be so good for another. Good and bad are a spectrum, and not as absolute as one might think.

Another way to qualify and describe the consequences of karma with a little more definity is to think of the consequences as grace and transgression. Imagine grace and transgression as attributes of personality that we carry with us and spend on our experiences in life. The spending may not always be a conscious choice, particularly if the spending involves transgression or repeating the lesson from another lifetime.

When we visualize and attempt to attract the things we want in life, the magic we create is greatly impacted by the remnants of grace and transgression within us.

Imagining grace creates another entity, an entity of unconditional love that permeates our existence. Not all grace is a consequence of our personal karma, as karma is more grand then self.

Grace is a gift from the cosmic that comes to us with each incarnation to protect us and help us make decisions that are appropriate for the destiny we created between lives. It is influence from entities who are our guides and teachers.

Grace also emanates toward us from the thought of others, some here on earth and others who have departed. Influence from this realm, however, can also be transgression.

We attract situations and people to us. Likewise, other people are attracted to us. What becomes of that attraction is a forecast for the success, lack of success, or stagnancy that comes about in our attempts at magic. In toll, the experiences we have with other beings become part of our own experience. When fully brought into consciousness, the result is a shared experience of being. The thought of sharing the experience of being, of existence, can be very frightening and seem as though one is losing their sense of identity. If the experience is about love one does not lose either their identity or their sense of self; they merely add to and expand it. If the consequence of our interaction with another is not about love, if it requires some level of transgression, of repeating a lesson learned earlier, then the experience can bring about a sense of loss. The loss, however, is only temporary.

Perhaps the greatest magic of all comes about from forgiveness. With forgiveness comes atonement, a method of reconciliation that abbreviates karmic impact. It isn't God that one asks for forgiveness, it is those whom we conclude have been offend by our thoughts and actions. To forgive is also a gift. The consequences of forgiveness become magic in themselves in enabling us to manifest our desire and visualizations.

Imagine what magic there would be if most or nearly all of our interactions on this planet resulted in good karma or grace. Is that the intention of karma? Is that our destiny? How does this era compare to the one before, and the one before that, and the one before that... and how do the karmic consequences of this lifetime compare to the previous lifetime, and the one before that, and the one before that...

The thought of generating karma that enables us to create greater magic is inspiring...it inspires us to donate some magic to the greater cause...

## EXPERIMENT: PARTNERS IN MAGIC

### Part 1: Spirit

1. Brainstorm and list spiritual artifacts that dwell in your consciousness. These may include books, religious objects and the ideas of other people or organizations.
2. Circle three artifacts that have the greatest impact on your thinking today. What emotions do they trigger? Why?
3. Use imagination to explore the range of emotion. What spiritual truth or conflict might there be beneath the surface? Use meditation techniques and visualization to create a spiritual drama by using associations of memory and emotion, then invite the drama into your subconscious simply by thinking about it before you go to sleep. Keep a journal of the results.
4. How might your dreams and the spiritual dramas you have created be used as a bridge to a greater understanding of spiritual truths?

### Part 2: Social & Sexual Relationships

1. Think about the people you attract and the people that are attracted to you.
2. Overall, how would you describe the karmic impact resulting from your interaction with others?
3. What mundane and spiritual influence might the people in current and previous relationships have on the manifestation of your goals and visualizations?

## MY EVOLVING CREED: MAGIC

1. I believe that reality is man made, and that we each have partners in the magic we bring into the mundane world.
2. I believe that everything that happens to us is intentional, although sometimes our intentions are unknown and subconscious.
3. I believe that the manifestation of our desires must be in harmony with our being, which includes the karma we created in this and prior lives as well as the destiny we mapped out with the cosmic concerning our current incarnation.
4. I believe that desire evolves as we experience life, and that we sometimes have desires in conflict.
5. I believe that we attract what we desire.
6. I believe that conflicted desires can result in stagnation, and that they can also result in surprising and sometimes disappointing manifestations.
7. I believe that the ultimate intention of magic is the evolution of our species.