

Chapter 22: Spirit

Man is kind enough when he is not excited by religion.

Mark Twain – *A Horse's Tale*

I'm aware that I may lose some readers with this confessional but I said in my preface that this was going to be an honest book and this stuff is important to me. I hope you're not offended by my bluntness and I intend no disrespect for anyone's belief system. I simply want to tell you about mine.

I suppose my spiritual evolution began when I was very young and began to harbor doubts about some of the things I was hearing in church and reading in the bible. I realize that most people capitalize that word when referring to the so-called "holy scriptures" but to me it's just a book of (mostly) dangerous and destructive mythology with a little history thrown in. There are many words of wisdom contained in that venerable tome – particularly the philosophy espoused by the Master referred to as "Jesus of Nazareth" – but much of the rest of the book is, in my opinion, politically manipulative bullshit.

One of my favorite authors, Mark Twain, had a lot to say about the bible and religion most of which I agree with. Here are two samples:

"It [the bible] is full of interest. It has noble poetry in it; and some clever fables; and some blood-drenched history; and some good morals; and a wealth of obscenity; and upwards of a thousand lies." – *Letters from the Earth*

"God, so atrocious in the Old Testament, so attractive in the New – the Jekyll and Hyde of sacred romance." – *Notebook*

Before you get too bent out of shape I must tell you that I am not an atheist. And after many years in the wilderness, as it were, I am now a very Spiritual man. But I make a strong distinction between being Spiritual and being religious.

If you read *Three Stages*, Book One of this memoir you know that I was raised as a fundamentalist Southern Baptist and, even though I had doubts, I adhered to those teachings (with a few digressions) until well into my college years. It was after finally shaking off the restrictive and life squelching dogma of my youth that I entered my agnostic period. From age twenty or so until I was in my late thirties I wanted nothing to do with anything even remotely smelling of religious beliefs.

As I related in chapter twelve, the experience of Transcendental Meditation launched me on the first leg of my Spiritual journey. Additional openings to Spirit were provided by the est training, Actualizations and many other consciousness workshops and seminars between '73 and '85.

These experiential events so stimulated my mental and Spiritual appetites that I began voraciously to devour books on metaphysical and scientific topics from Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* to Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*. I read Gary Zukav's *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, and several other books on quantum physics. I read all of Itzhak Bentov and Carlos Castaneda, much of Richard Feynman and Stephen Hawking. I plowed through these books and authors and many more of their type between my thirty-eighth and fiftieth years.

One of the things I learned through this exploration was the striking similarity between the theories and discoveries of advanced physics and the teachings of many Spiritual Masters.

It was during this period that the distinction between spirituality and religiosity became clear to me. All this was greatly abetted by Elizabeth's parallel journey and the discussions and meditations we shared.

Robert Monroe's *Journeys Out of the Body* and Raymond Moody's *Life After Life* had profound effects on me. Then came Monroe's *Far Journeys* and my ideas about the nature of life, both physical and nonphysical began to coalesce. My six days at the Monroe Institute for Applied Science in '85 put the icing on my Spiritual cake. (Chapter Nineteen)

So here's my take on the nature of life and what most folks call "God".

I am an omnitheist. That is: I maintain that everything which exists, material and nonmaterial, collectively comprises "god". This is not exactly a revolutionary concept. Some (very liberal) people even interpret the various "bibles" of their particular faiths in a way not very far from that idea. Okay, fine. I'm just not a fan of orthodoxy. For me the structure of any organized religion with its rituals, rules and what I perceive as herd mentality has no appeal. For many this structure is comforting and reassuring but to me it seems more like mind (behavior) control created by a "priest" class for political purposes. There are, no doubt, exceptions to this and, anyhow, if it works for you that's great. I respect that. As the old saying goes, "whatever gets you through the night."

This is the way I see what we call physical reality. My description is based on the meditating, reading and experiencing I have done over the past forty years. The structure of my concept is greatly influenced by Bob Monroe and his term, Time Space Illusion (TSI). I'm just gonna state this concept in a matter-of-fact way and you can interpret it, believe it, think I'm a looney tuner or whatever you want. I have no investment in your agreement. You're free to consider me a nutburger if that makes you feel good. I am not interested in convincing or converting anyone to my way of perceiving so-called reality. There is room for as many ideas about "reality" as there are minds to think it up.

We are primarily beings of Spirit and, as such, we do not die. From time to time (also an illusion) we change form and enter TSI for various reasons and durations. Our true existence is not physical – in the sense that we who currently possess bodies in TSI regard as physical.

Here's an analogy that I find useful to clarify the idea. I think I got it from Bob Monroe. It's not my original creation.

The Spiritual realm may be considered analogous to extreme altitude where the air pressure is very weak. Atmospheric pressure at sea level is around 14.7 psi. (Psi = pounds per square inch of area) The higher you go in the air the lower the psi and the deeper you go in water the higher the psi. At 33 feet under water it's about double what it is at sea level and as you go deeper it increases. This is why people wear those big cumbersome diving suits when working on the ocean floor. I'm sure you already knew that but humor me.

So one of us, in the native spirit state, decides to enter TSI for whatever reason. Maybe to take a vacation, to experience something that's only available in the physical, maybe to clean up something that went wrong in another trip to TSI, maybe to learn something; whatever reason, it doesn't matter. Anyhow, to a spirit being, TSI is like the ocean floor is to a human. So the person coming to TSI needs a diving suit, aka a human body.

That person also needs to choose a TSI time period and family in which to take birth. Therefore to me the familiar saying that something (either good or bad) is “an accident of birth” is a misnomer. I believe that while we are in Spirit form we make all the decisions about our trips to TSI so that we will be in the position to experience the necessary elements in this reality to fulfill the purpose of the trip.

Except for very advanced beings, once we don the human form we forget all about where we came from. This generally happens slowly and explains why small children often see and hear things that older humans do not. As we grow physically mature most of us even forget why we came here in the first place. Some don't. Mozart obviously didn't, to cite one example.

On some deep and usually unconscious level we actually know where we came from and why we came. Many of us eventually discern our purpose on the cognitive level. But whether or not we do get our Spirit's intention consciously, our true Self at least knows when it's finished here so we discard the diving suit (human body) and return to the spirit state – home.

“Here is a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: If you're alive, it isn't.” – Richard Bach (*Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah*)

In my case, after seventy-seven years and five months (as I write this), I am still not certain why I came to TSI this time. I must have chosen Lucy Eller Bryant as my mother to get her genetic disposition for musical-vocal talent and yet at the peak of that power I cast it aside. Why did I do that? In retrospect maybe it was a mistake. Perhaps I came here to sing and was too dumb to know that was my life purpose and so I blew it. However if I had continued on that path I would have not learned to express myself through the creation and (especially) editing of video which has become a great joy to me and has brought enjoyment to others. So I still have not reached a level of enlightenment sufficient to bring clarity to my own purpose. But I'll continue the pursuit of that knowledge as long as I'm here. Maybe that's the purpose: the pursuit? I'm not sure but I continue my meditations and perhaps before I leave TSI I will become clear to me.

At the end of “Openers” I quoted a passage from Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* in which his protagonist said in part ...*There was a part of me too that just wanted to pull everybody back in the boat. If I've tried to cultivate anything it's been that.*

Maybe that was part of my life purpose. It is a thing that I have done on several occasions from carrying my “brother” up the hill in my college initiation and rescuing Jeff in the quarry to helping Tom Brumberger kick his alcohol habit. But I didn't do any of these and other similar things with a grand or heroic intention. I was there and it needed to be done so I did it. Thus if I do have a “Philosophy of Life” I guess that may be it. If I'm there and it needs to be done, I do it. But I digress. Back to my cosmological theory.

We can incarnate as many times as we want or need to and I also think that we have families of a sort in the nonphysical realm. We've all had the experience of, if not love, at least recognition at first sight. This occurs when, in TSI, we encounter a member of our Spirit family who is wearing his/her diving suit.

I have had this experience several times in this lifetime. Four instances come to mind (in order of appearance): Bob Collins in high school, Noel Parenti in *Guys & Dolls* (1961), Jeff Siggins in *Pousse Cafe* (1965) and most notably, “Betsy” Hepburn two years later. In each case I

had a sense of recognition upon our first meeting. The only instance in which the recognition was conscious was Betsy. As related in chapter nine, I told her that first day that although I was aware that we'd never met, I knew her.

Sometimes the converse is true; dislike at first sight. I don't know about you but I suspect that, like me, there have been instances upon which you've experienced an instant aversion to or distrust or even fear of someone you just met and yet over a period of time you have become very close to that person.

I'm not going to speculate on explanations of these sorts of connections but it does seem to me that they must be based on a Spirit association of some kind.

I'll leave it to you to either ponder these ideas or reject them out of hand as your proclivities dictate.

A few more of Mark Twain's observations about religion:

"In religion and politics people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination, from authorities who have not themselves examined the questions at issue but have taken them at second-hand from other non-examiners, whose opinions about them were not worth a brass farthing." – *Autobiography of Mark Twain*

"Man is a Religious Animal. He is the only Religious Animal. He is the only animal that has the True Religion—several of them. He is the only animal that loves his neighbor as himself and cuts his throat if his theology isn't straight. He has made a graveyard of the globe in trying his honest best to smooth his brother's path to happiness and heaven." – *The Lowest Animal*

"If Christ were here there is one thing he would not be—a Christian." – *Notebook*

"The so-called Christian nations are the most enlightened and progressive...but in spite of their religion, not because of it. The Church has opposed every innovation and discovery from the day of Galileo down to our own time, when the use of anesthetic in childbirth was regarded as a sin because it avoided the biblical curse pronounced against Eve. And every step in astronomy and geology ever taken has been opposed by bigotry and superstition. " – *Mark Twain, a Biography*

And lastly, my favorite:

"Concentration of power in a political machine is bad; and an Established Church is only a political machine; it was invented for that; it is nursed, cradled, preserved for that; it is an enemy to human liberty, and does no good which it could not better do in a split-

up and scattered condition." — *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*