

# What Is



by

Ron Flowers

&

Steven Flowers

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The way this book came about was as part of a sibling rivalry that went all the way back to early childhood. As the oldest brother in the family, I found myself always trying to dominate Steve, the youngest of the three of us. We argued constantly over almost anything and must have driven our mother crazy at times.

Even after we had moved out and each of us had married and started our own families, we still enjoyed weekly phone conversations which often ended in an argument, usually involving theology. You see, Steve had become a born again Christian by this time, while I had always preferred the Eastern traditions. These verbal arguments went on for over thirty years until about two years ago when the idea arose that we should put the debate in print and maybe even develop a book of sorts. I wanted something with lots of pictures and a minimum of words.

Steve's son, Simeon, suggested the format that we finally agreed upon. Simeon would act as moderator and ask each of us a question which we would answer without seeing the other's response. After the first answer, we would then each respond to the other's answer and continue the discussion back and forth until an endpoint was reached. The idea was to let the reader decide who was winning the debate. The original idea was that after the first question was resolved, Simeon would then ask another and we would debate that one. But as it turned out, we never got past the first question: What is?

Our answers are presented here for your reading enjoyment.

Ron Flowers

## Introduction

iv

As the Psalmist writes, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is, for brothers to dwell together, in Unity.” (Psalm 133:1)

3,000 years later, and after a lifetime of debate on the issue, two brothers ask the reader to be the judge to an age old question put most simply and without presupposition as, “What Is?”

In the beginning, there was Ron? I asked Ron once, if he was a Solipsist,\* to which he responded, “yes.” I was sure he was unaware of what the word meant, because it was not the answer I expected to the question. I had been trying in my own debate with him, to get to the root of an issue, and unexpectedly found it. My first thought was, “What a fool! Surely this is madness!” But, what is madness? If Ron is correct, then “madness” is meaningless as a division, because what are we dividing, if all is one and the same? And even if he is mistaken, a label holds no more meaning than it conjures up in the mind of the one making the division. So, to quote Ron, “What we see in others, is often a reflection of what is within ourselves.”

Then there is Steve, the youngest of the family, who speaks of this “thing,” this thing he speaks of as if it is almost a foreign word to us, outside of us, around us, and even in us? This thing he calls, “Love.” But what is “Love,” if it is not in relationship? And if there is “Love,” then there must also be, “non-Love.” If there is but One, then how can there be Two? Solipsism, and Pluralism? Can they co-exist?

During the writing of the project, both brothers lost their mother to natural causes, and Ron lost his wife, to cancer. And yet, in spite of it all, or perhaps as an even more seeming pressing need, they have continued on, seeking answers to these questions, in the mind of the other.

Maybe it is time, to rethink everything you ever thought about everything, for the sake of these Two Brothers, who try and solve the age old question, even if only for themselves. These two who represent us all in many ways, striving not to strive? These two, who's very existences seem to contradict each others, and yet they cannot possibly be without the other. Can their world views ever meet in the middle? Is simple disagreement proof that one or the other is wrong, or that they are both right? Can you, the reader solve this puzzle without yourself going mad?

by Simeon Flowers  
*Steve's son*

What Is?

\*One who holds the philosophical view that only one's own mind can be known to exist, and that any knowledge of things outside your own specific consciousness is unverifiable.



What Is

?

## Ron's Answer:

What Is?

At the moment there is a cool wind blowing.  
It is a typical hot summer day and any movement is welcome;  
But this breeze stands out because it is so refreshingly cold,  
And it has a telltale density about it.  
It feels heavy and carries the scent of distant rain.  
I find myself listening for the sounds that will signal thunder.  
What a joy when still dryness suddenly turns to rivers of water.



Science tells me the world operates by causes which bring about effects.  
But if I watch my mind closely enough I find that first it registers an effect,  
And then looks around for the most likely cause.  
So which order is correct?  
Or are these simply two events which are always found together?  
In ancient times this was called the mutual arising of the world.  
Nature is seen as interconnected and united as a single whole.





This oneness of nature also penetrates into my body and mind.  
The entire known world is known through chemical reactions going on inside my brain.  
I am evoking all realities through my conscious awareness of them.  
So I am not just listening to this summer storm now roaring around me;  
But I am also creating it through my participation in life.  
At this very moment and on this very spot,  
There is one experiencing going on masquerading as both Universe and I.



## Steve's Reply:

In response to my brother's eloquent answer to the question, "what is?" And I do mean eloquent, and elegant. I appreciate the form: three verses of seven lines per verse; reminds me of the three sevens of Revelations. seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials.

My brother's point about experiencing the moment is presented well But, I'm left asking the same question.



What is at this very moment, masquerading as both you, and Universe?  
Is "IT" animal, vegetable, or mineral???



Ron's reply:

Yes, what is it?

I don't know!

Maybe it just IS.

After all, what is a flower, a meadow, or an unseen creek?



What is that crawling thing beneath my feet?

I don't know.

I only know what it seems to be:

Unique expressions of a life which never tires of itself.

Which eternally experiences itself from an infinity of views.

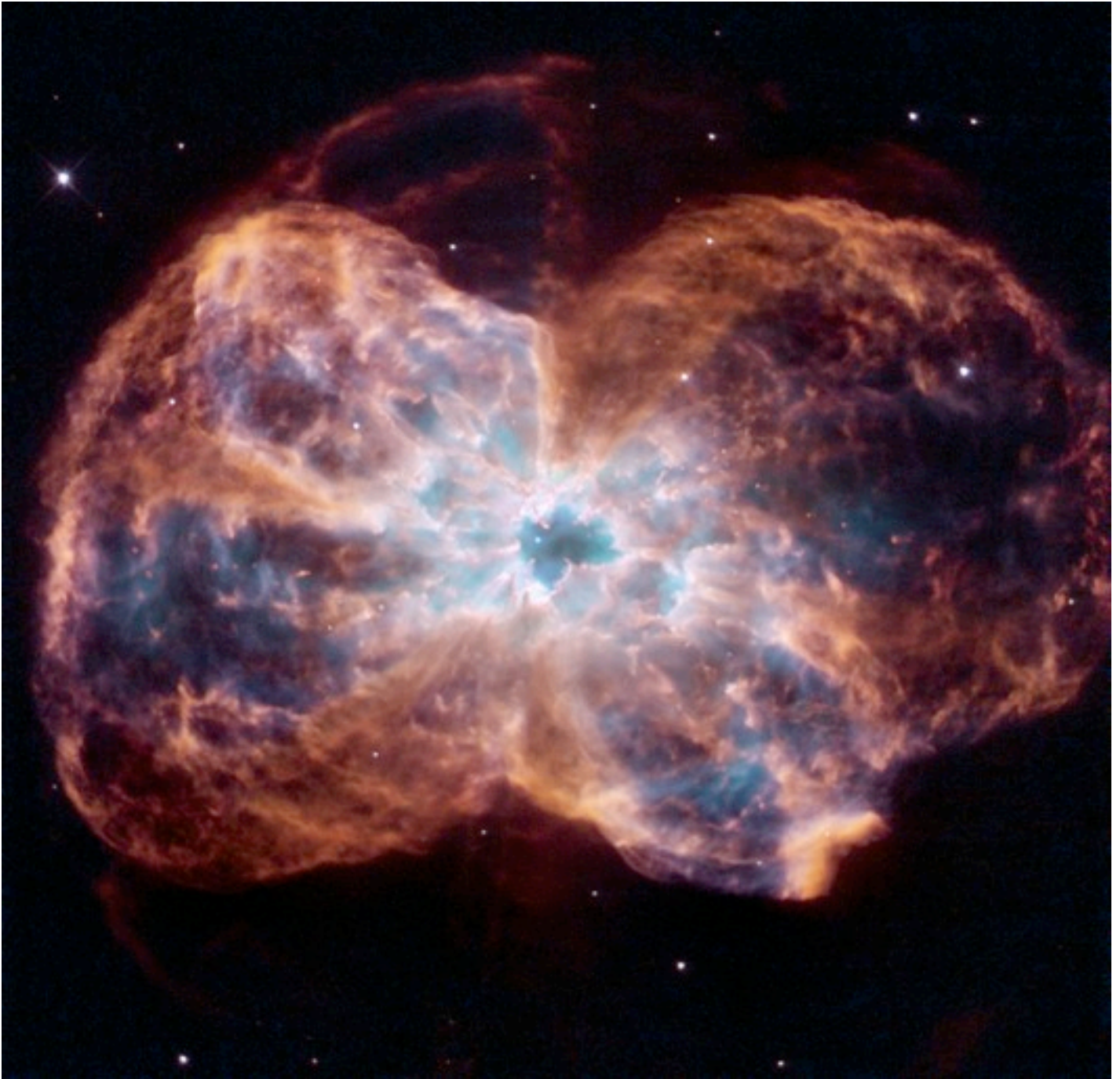




## Steve's Reply:

So my brother says that he does not know what "IT" is, only what it seems to be: "unique expressions of a life which never tires of itself, which eternally experiences itself from an infinity of views."

If "IT" is an eternal, unique, tireless, infinite, self exiting life, why don't we just call "IT" God?



## Ron's Reply:

Why not call it "God"?

Because "God" is a 3 letter word representing a concept.

And these living presences surrounding me are not concepts.

Concepts are always wrong,

Because concepts are never the thing itself.

Concepts are like stone tablets.

But the "its" of the world are alive and moving.

And some have tiny little eyes that stare at me.



And I can stare back,

Because I too am not a concept.

I am the experiencing which transcends concepts.



## Steve's Reply:

So you won't call it God because “‘God’ is a three letter word representing a concept.” Oddly enough “Ron,” also is a three letter word representing a concept; yet I call you Ron, and I'm never confused as to the fact that you are a living being, and not a concept. You call our mother “Mom,” does that reduce her to a three letter word representing a concept?

Why is the word “God”, which is a three letter word for the infinite self existing ONE, so different then your use of any other word for any other reality? A word is never the thing it represents, and is never confused as such.



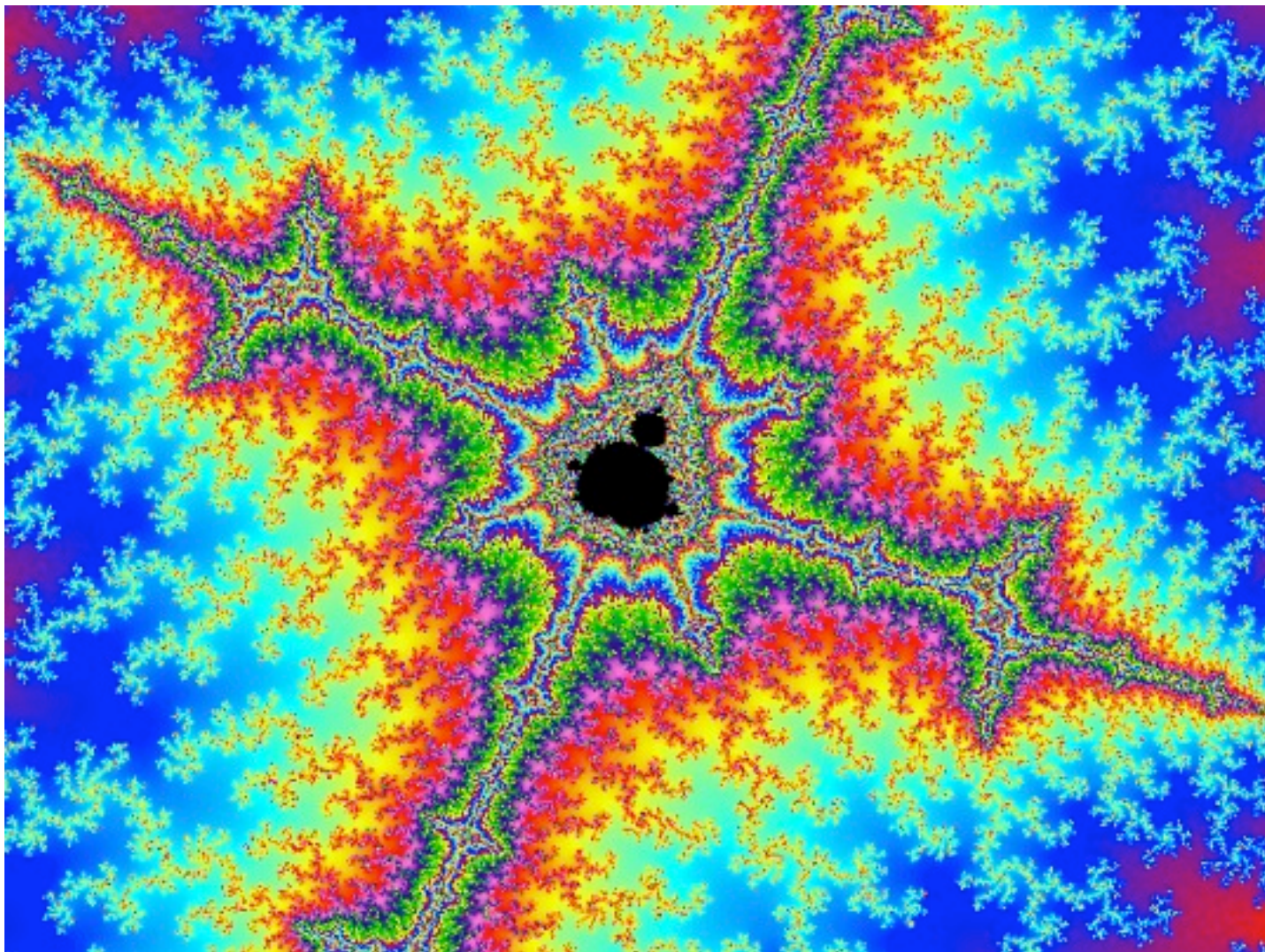
Ron made no Reply.



## Steve's Reply:

Since my brother declined to answer my question about why the word "God" is so different than his use of any other word for any other reality, I will explain the problem to the reader. It is not, as he suggests, because it is "a three letter word representing a concept," since all language has this aspect. His reluctance is because "God" is a three letter word which holds a **different** meaning to each of us. We are able to talk about "Mom," without this conflict, because "Mom" means the **same thing** to both of us. The word "God," on the other hand, means something totally different to each of us. It would be inappropriate for him to call "IT" God, because, his meaning for the word "God" is different than his meaning for "IT;" Yet we are calling "IT," "IT" in this exchange without a problem, because the two letter word, "IT," remains completely undefined, thus avoiding this problem of semantics.

So with this explanation, I too will not refer to "IT" as God, for the remainder of this dialog.





## Ron's Reply:

Very well said,  
We are as One on this.

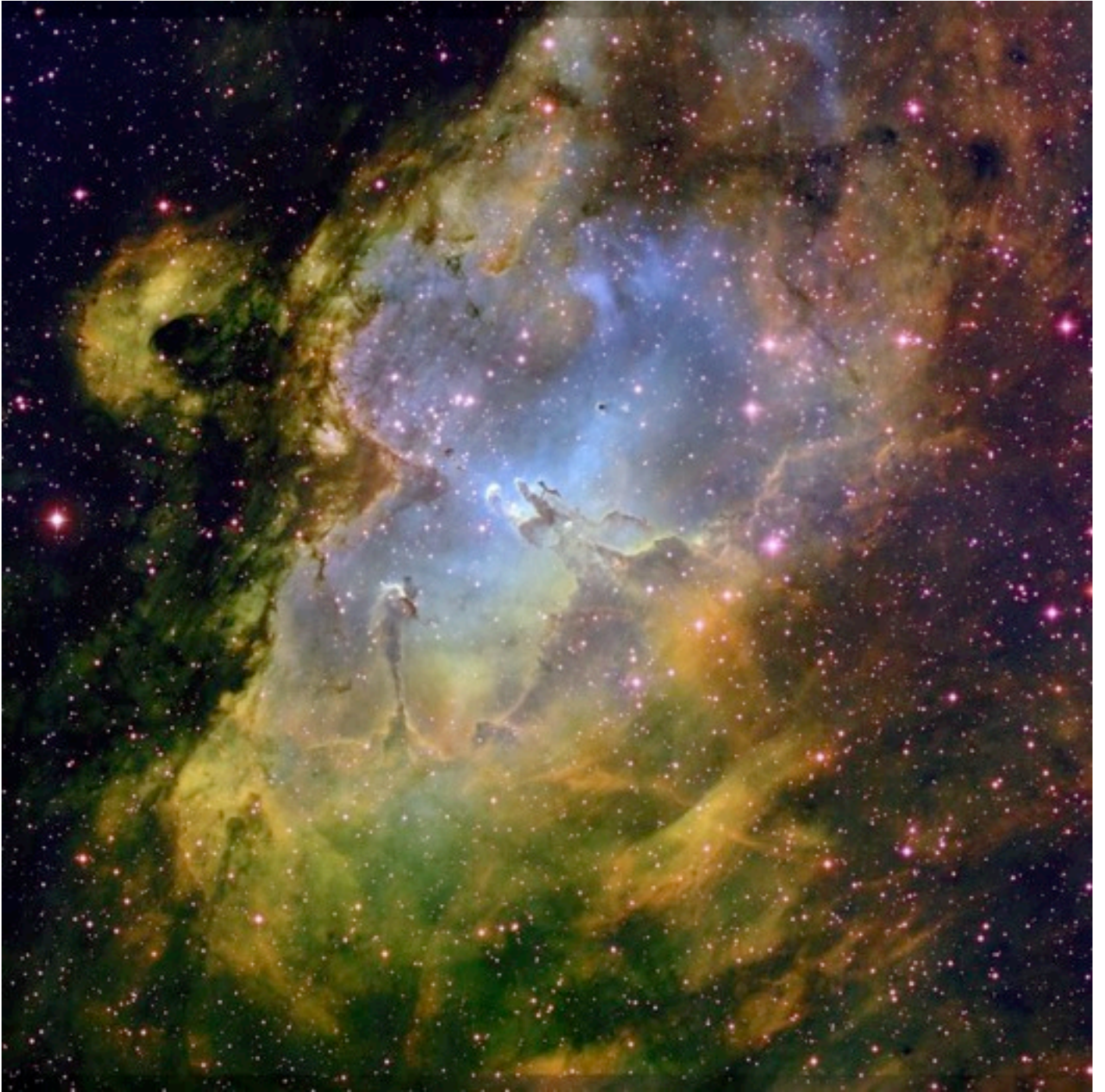




Steve made no Reply.

What Is

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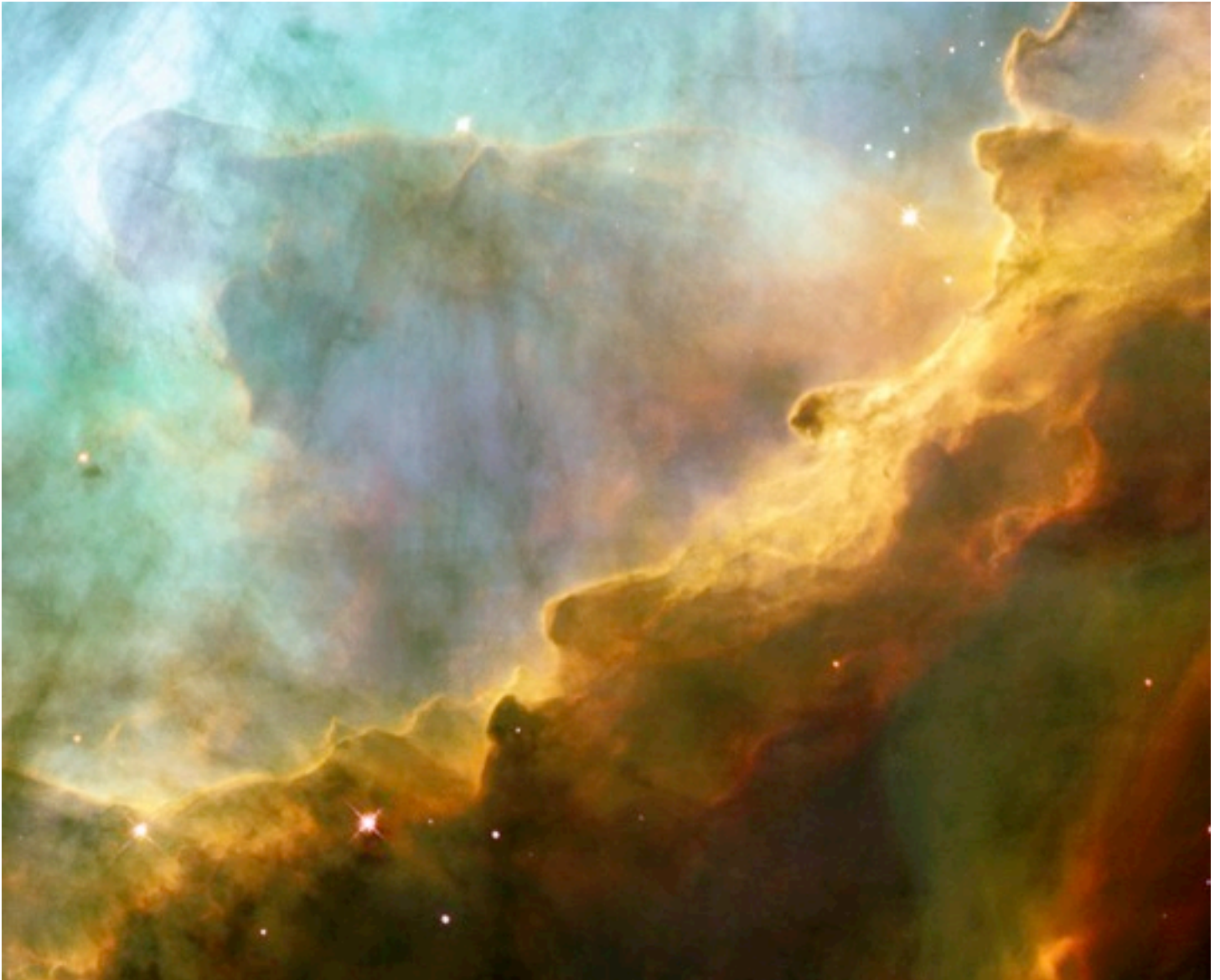




Steve's Answer:

# What Is?

## Love, faith, and hope.



everything else is temporary.

Ron's Reply:

Is there anything that is not temporary?

In my moment to moment universe, everything is constantly changing and all is impermanent. Things arise and things pass away. There is nothing to hold on to and no place to stand.

All is quicksand!

All is motion!

It matters not whether I am looking at swirling clouds above, or watery waves below;  
Everywhere I look is change:





Even concepts like “Truth”, “Love,” and “God” have no fixed or permanent meaning for me.

With each new day these are redefined.

Even my image of myself is not safe from this flux.

The collection of memories and opinions I call myself change with every new day.

The I, I was, as a child, would not recognize the I, I am now.

Which “I” is the real me? Or is there a “real” me?

When I asked my meditation teacher what ultimate truth I would find if I meditated long enough, he answered: “That you don’t exist.”



Steve's Reply:

Is "LOVE" only a concept?

Though it is true that there are many different concepts of LOVE, does that make LOVE a concept? The word "love," is a four letter symbol for something. It depends on how the word is used, as to what the symbol represents. The word "love," in the context in which it is found, creates a concept. But, when one is actually touched by LOVE, it no longer matters what anyone's concept is. It's not the concept of love that touches us.

My answer to the question, "What is?" Was simply, "LOVE, FAITH, and HOPE. Everything else is temporary." Clearly we both agree on the temporary nature of "every else," so the issue at hand is LOVE. Does LOVE exist, or is it only a concept? If LOVE exists, it contains both faith, and hope. To paraphrase the best selling book of all times, "LOVE believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Suppose a man had been born blind, and never saw the LIGHT of the sun, But had grown up forming concepts about what the world is like. If the day came when his eyes were opened, do you suppose he would, consider LIGHT, to be a concept any more? The reality of something, always supersedes the concept of it. If LOVE remains only a concept to my brother, it can only mean he has yet to be touched by it. But since LOVE does exist, there is always hope.





Ron's Reply:





Steve's Reply:

So perhaps you now see that LOVE is a reality, and not mere concept; since the pictures you present are examples of that reality. Are you then now agreeing with me? It appears that you've simply put pictures to my words, leaving me nothing to respond to.

It sort of reminds me of our earlier years when you used to change sides in a debate if you suddenly felt the other side was right.

What are you saying?





Ron's response:

You Are Right.

I am Wrong.

(Or I am right and you are wrong.)

In a debate, like all contests humans enter into, you have a winner and a loser.

Each side exists in relationship to the other.

But often people get angry in defending their positions.



Most have come to believe they are their personality, their ego, their opinions and preferences and because of that illusion they think being “right” or “winning” is important.

But what is “right” without “wrong?”

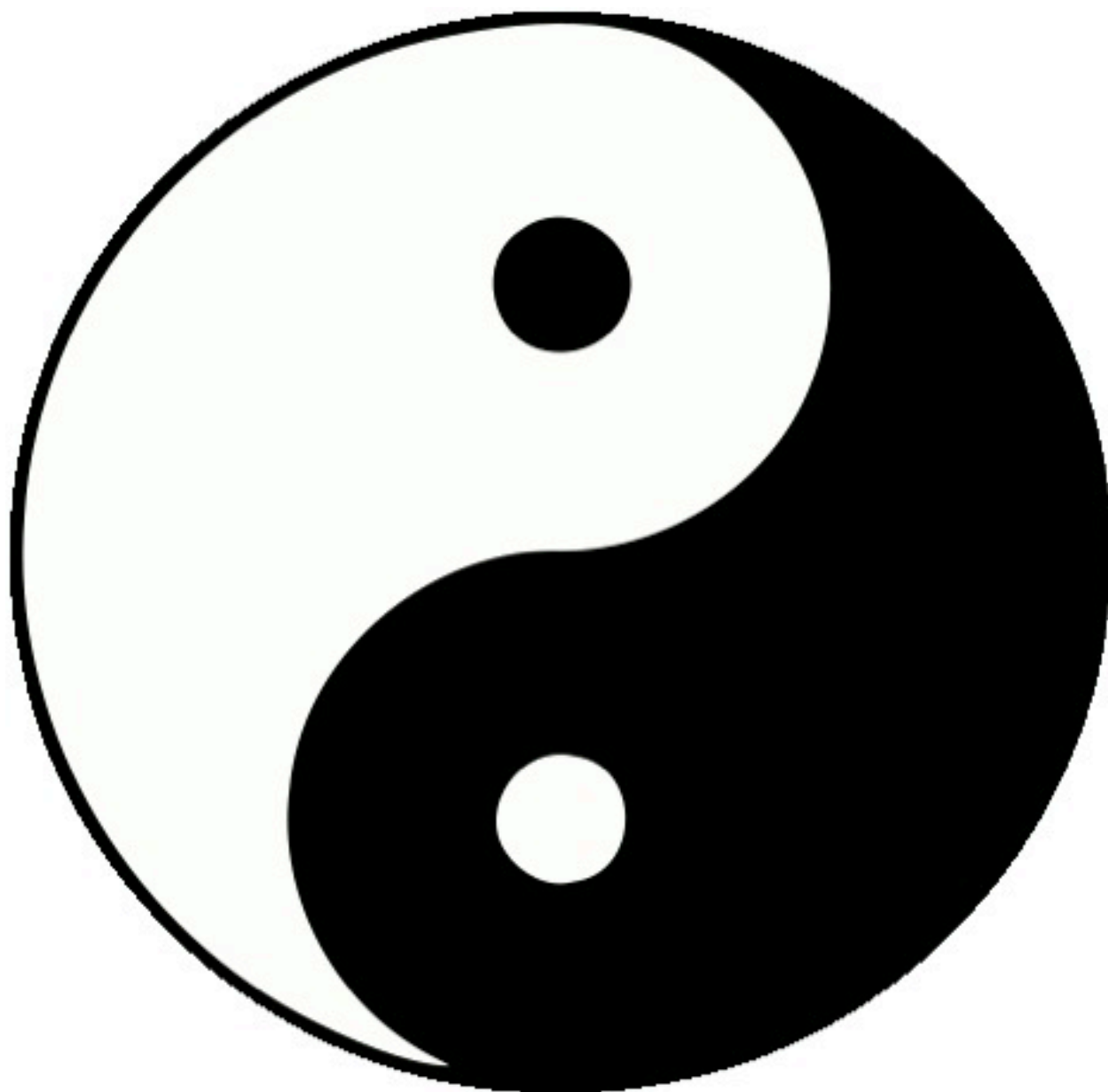


Within the realm of conceptual time everything is experienced as the play of opposites.

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| Right / Wrong | Sin / Virtue  |
| Hot / Cold    | Up / Down     |
| + / --        | On / Off      |
| Love / Hate   | Black / White |
| Self / Other  | Life / Death  |

Every thing-event, which includes me, is known only in relationship to everything else.  
 All polar opposites are really two sides of the same coin.  
 Every inside has to have an outside, and every outside has to have an inside.  
 You can't have IS without IS-NOT.

And that is why I am united in a oneness that includes all of existence. And that is why "death," being the other side of "life," holds no fear for me.



Which fish is “right” and which is “wrong?”

Which is the “winner” and which the “loser?”

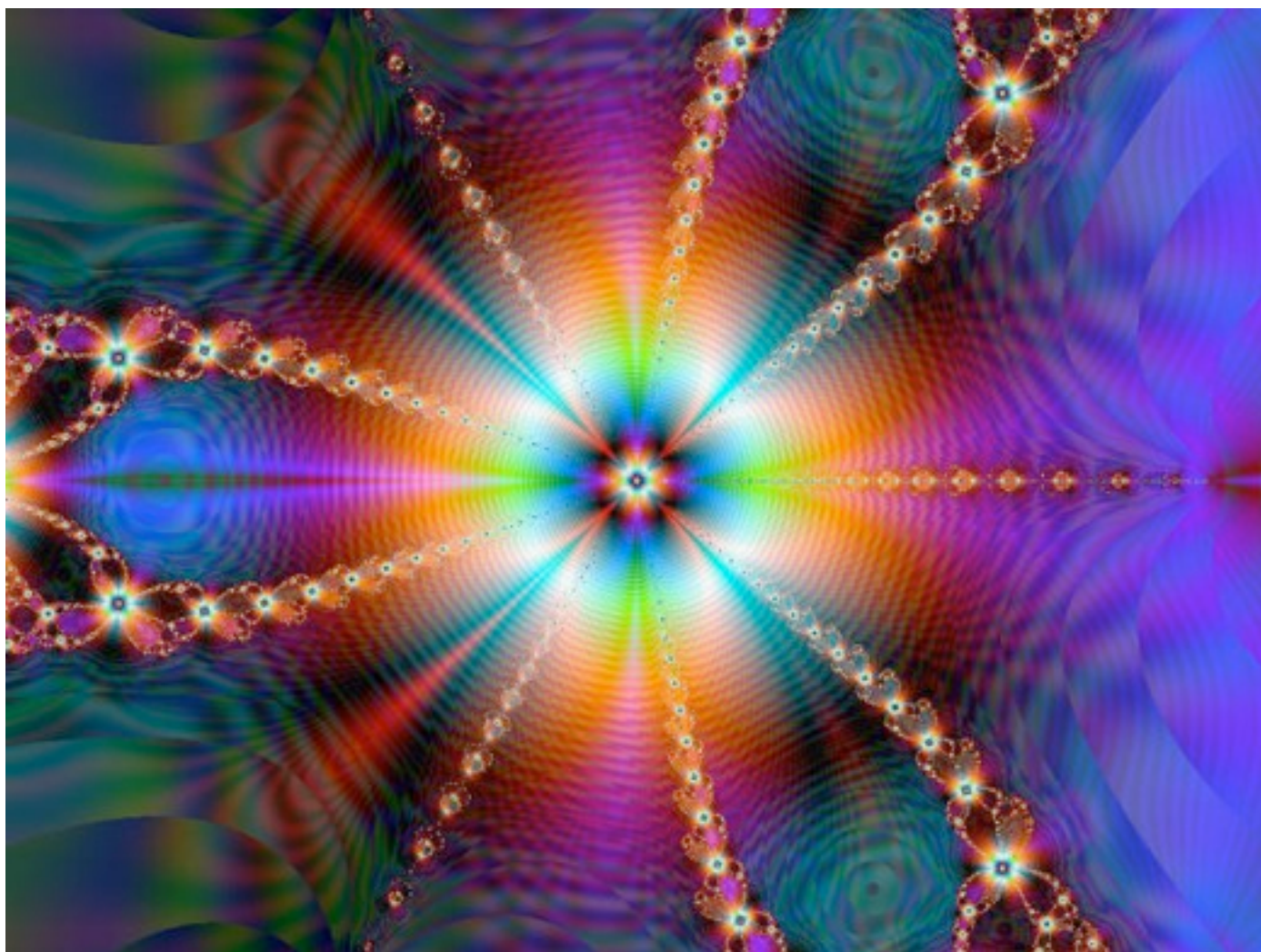
### Steve's Reply:

You have yet to responded to my question to you about LOVE: whether it is a REALITY, or only a concept to you. First you offer pictures depicting examples of the expressions of LOVE, seemingly pointing to love's REALITY; and when I ask you, "What are you saying?," because it would appear from the pictures that you see that LOVE is a REALITY, and not a mere concept, but instead of responding, you seem to give up by saying, "You Are Right. I Am Wrong." But then quickly add, "(Or maybe I am right and you are wrong)," ignoring the question entirely, except to suggest that love and hate are opposites, and **need** each other some how, to have meaning, defining each other, rather than **each defining itself**.





The only way that I can “win” this debate, is if I can persuade you. As long as you remain un-persuaded, I have not “won.” And obviously, you have yet to persuade me, so there are no winners yet. Coming to agreement would make us **both** “winners,” being on the same side. As it stands, there are no “winners” yet, only two people who are not in agreement on a fundamental question. If you can persuade me, then I will agree with you, and turn from my error. Or if I can persuade you, perhaps you would turn from your error. Either way, the result would be two winners and no losers. The only loser in **this** debate, would be one who holds to their position, in the light of persuasion to the contrary; you know, someone willing to remain ignorant, after seeing the light.



My question to you about LOVE remains. Is LOVE a REALITY, or is it only a concept to you?



Since you have now brought in “polar opposites,” the belief that LOVE and HATE are two sides of the same coin, I will deal with it; though I am still waiting to hear if LOVE is even REAL, in your world. The polar opposites argument is a flawed position, in that it implies that LOVE needs hate, to give it meaning; and that LOVE and hate are some how opposite, but equal, and always having to coexist; because LOVE can not exist without hate, which defines it.

On the contrary, LOVE has always existed. LOVE existed long before hate, and will exist long after hate has been forgotten.

The **proof** that hate is temporary is obvious.

**Inherent** to its **own** nature, **hate is self destructive**, and therefore can not possibly last forever. Hate destroys the things around it, and in the process, destroys itself; therefore hate is inherently unstable, and **temporary**, doomed to destroy itself in the end. As Jesus explains, “A house divided against itself, cannot stand.”

As for your question about the two fish: you asked, “Which one is the winner; and which one is the loser?” I would say; That depends on which one is the Lion fish; And which one is not the Lion fish. The Lion fish is the winner, and the other poor fish doesn't have a prayer.



### Ron's Reply:

For me, love is only a reality if I experience it as an emotion.  
If I turn it into a thought it becomes a concept and is limited.  
As a concept I can debate about its ability to be self defining or exist without corollaries,  
like hate, indifference, apathy, or an attitude of not caring.  
But it's only as a wordless emotion that "love" truly comes into existence, as in this image:

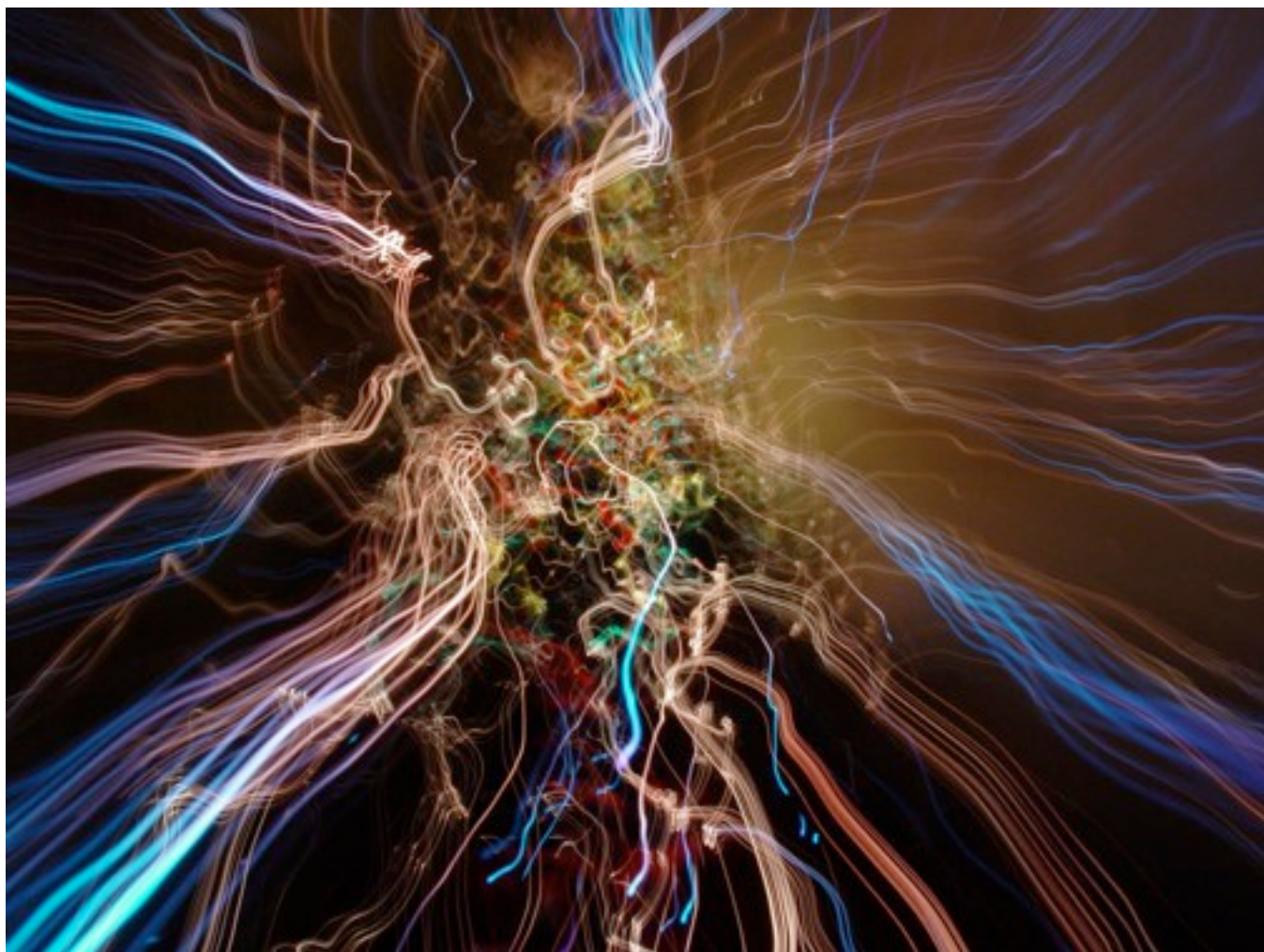


There is no question about the destructiveness of hate. I see it all around me in the countless acts of war and cruelty humans continue to inflict upon each other.  
But hate cannot destroy itself because it does not exist by itself.  
It originates and survives only within mankind's false identity, the ego.  
And regardless of whether it exists as an individual ego, or as the collective egos of countries, cultures, and world religions, it seeks to persuade others through logic and by force.



But egos are always unhappy, unsatisfied, unfulfilled, and suffer from constant desires. So how did this ignorance which separates humanity from the bliss of divine spirit come about?

My take on it is that the intelligence which is the source and energy of all things enters into form and becomes consciousness much like beams of light penetrate and illuminate darkness.



But at some point in the evolution of human consciousness self awareness developed as a survival mechanism and egos were born out of that ability to observe one's self. But ego structures, once formed, want to continue to survive long after their usefulness ends. They do this through identification with form and end up equating "being" with "having." They perpetuate themselves through comparisons and conflicts with other egos; and never experience reality directly, but exist only within the abstracted world of words.

They become prisoners of psychological time, believing in the concepts of “past” and “future” and never experience the eternity awaiting all beings within the ever present now moment. The ego’s sense of separation isolates humans from the joy and happiness to be found in all of nature.



But I have found the bliss which comes with the freedom from ego’s false face.  
And it’s as easy and simple as just quieting the mind of its constant chattering of thoughts.  
In that stillness I become aware of the timeless nature of my self and of my surroundings;  
and I can enter into the creative processes going on all around me and feel fully at home.





Steve's Reply:

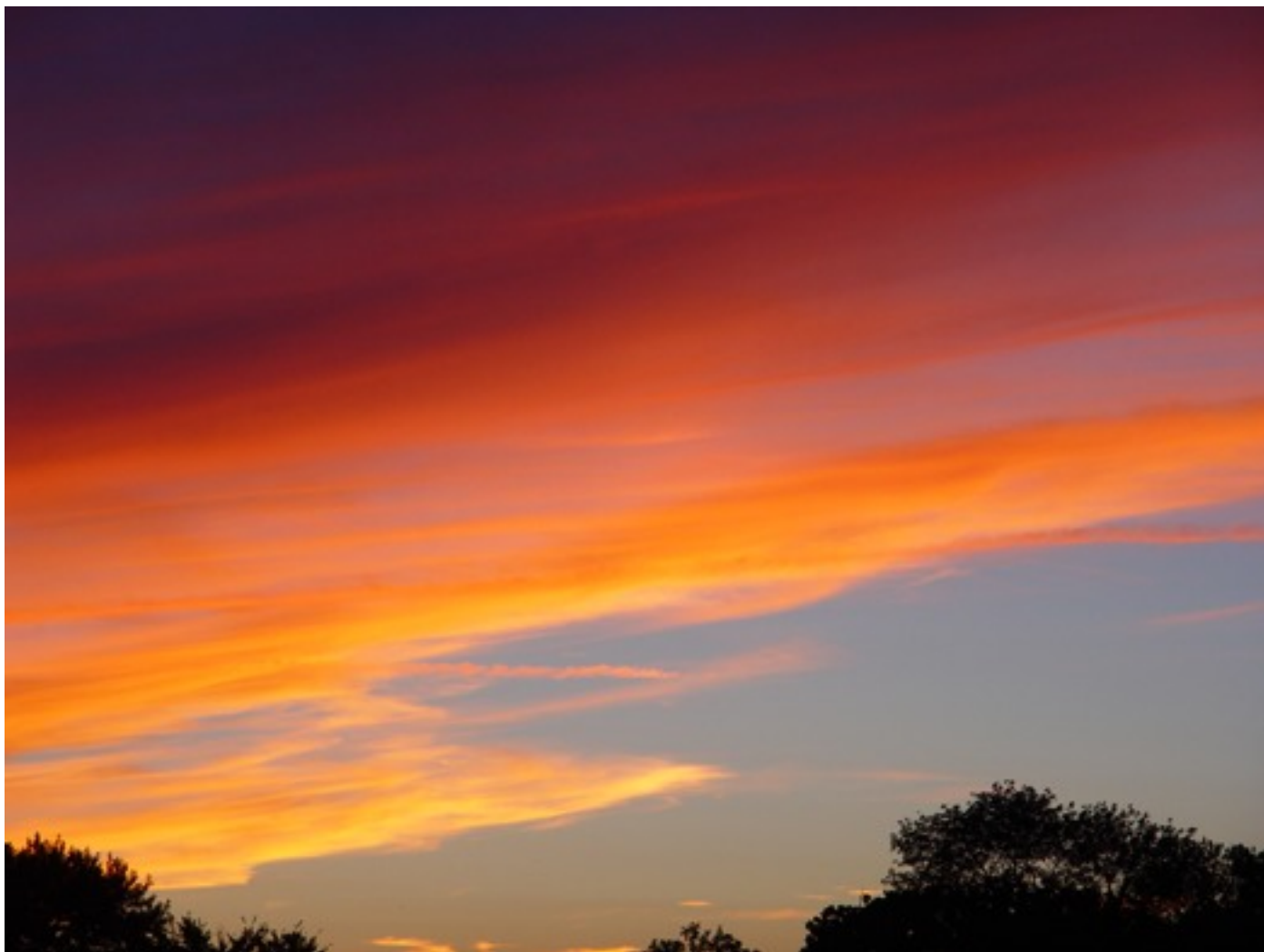
This is good.

We do agree that the REALITY of LOVE is not found in any concept; and that there is LOVE. It is experienced as an emotion by you at times; and at those times, LOVE is REAL for you.

I would suggest that LOVE is no less REAL after you have stopped feeling it; nor was it any less real before you experienced it.

Feeling the reality of LOVE through our emotions is when we best understand LOVE; but we can also see it, as in the picture you offered. We have the capacity to empathize with others, feeling the love they feel.

I see LOVE in a beautiful sunset, and in a butterfly; and whenever I take the time to consider most any natural thing; When I look beyond what I already "know," and behold the wonder of what is, LOVE is what I see. Beauty seems to be an inherent quality in nature which resonates in me as LOVE.



And when I look at the breathtaking pictures of our Magnificent Universe, I see LOVE as far as the eye can see, and as far back in time as man can presently peer. I find it impossible to imagine a time when LOVE did not exist. It seems obvious to me, that all the beauty that fills this Universe, is a direct result and testimony to that LOVE, out of which it all comes, and for whom it is all intended.





I agree with you that man's ego, is the problem; but I see that the problem is way beyond man's ability to solve.

Man's attempt to solve the ego problem results in all the religions of the world, as well as all the wars. But no religion can solve the ego problem, because all religions come from the ego. The solution has to come from outside our own ego, since any solution that originates from the ego, will just be more ego, disguised as something else.

The **solution**, is when LOVE comes, in the form of a man, and puts to death Man's ego, once and for all, for all who **believe**.

I agree with you that hate cannot actually destroy itself; it can only destroy those who surrender to it.

And I agree that hate needs egos, through which it can express itself. But unlike more considerate parasites, hate is quite willing to destroy its own host. It is in this way that it eventually destroys itself. Though presently there seems to be no shortage of egos, thirsty for hate, and unwilling to forgive. So one could expect hate to have a "good time," for a while.

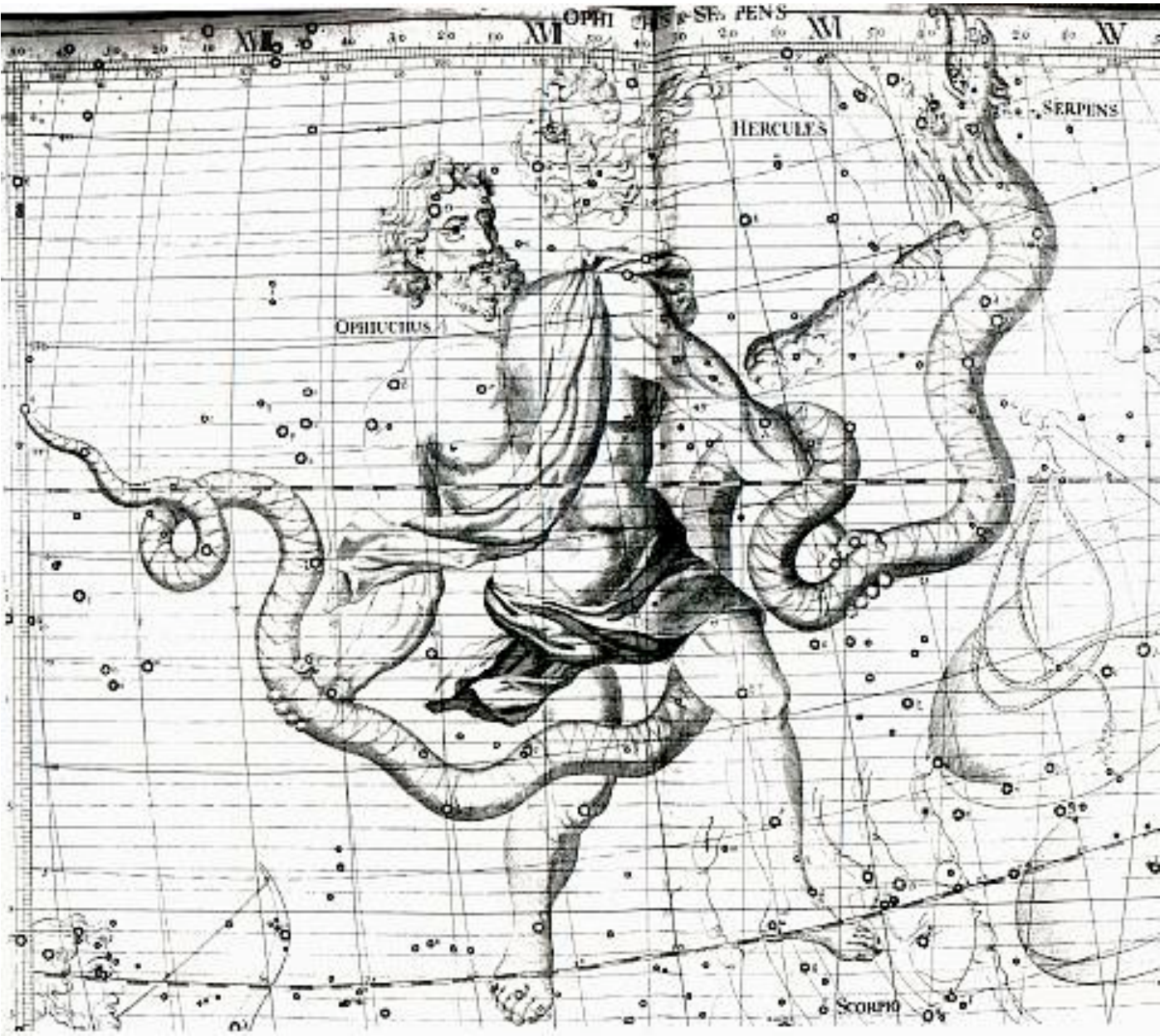
But LOVE is the solution to hate. And LOVE endures forever; whereas hate lasts only for a season; and I believe that, that season is coming to a close. It is a season of ignorance, for which the only cure is LIGHT; and a season of hate, for which the only cure is LOVE.





Exactly how and when self awareness emerged is of course, highly speculative. The Bible gives the account as Man's first act of disobedience, after being placed in the garden prepared for him, and given instructions to care for it. The only forbidden fruit in the garden, was the fruit of the tree of “the knowledge of good and evil,” and it was placed in the middle of the garden; clearly a set up, designed for man to prove he has free will.

Self will is discovered along with self awareness, and the **guilt** that comes from disobedience; all of which leads to shame, and the wanting to hide. It was here that man first discovered himself, and then covered himself, out of shame. And it was also here that the **Solution** to the problem was first promised.





Ron's Reply:

That was well written and well thought out. I fear that in giving it a proper response I will become very wordy and the pictures will suffer.

Yes, I agree that the inherent beauty found in Nature resonates with Love, especially when looked at without "knowing," and simply beheld, as "wonder." And I know we both have that ability.

But most beings in this society, which is so dominated by the ego, are not able to experience Reality directly, and so miss out on all the Love that's around them. That's because they cannot escape the trap of their own minds. I feel this is why there is so much unhappiness everywhere you look. People feel unfulfilled and have no connection with Reality. If they could experience life's fullness without thinking all the time, they would realize that their individual existence is like the waves and foam on the surface of the sea. While their true identity is the power and depth of the whole Ocean.

*"As waves come with water and flames with fire so the universal waves with us."*



But to experience this they would have to go below the surface of their memories and habits of thought which define their egos. They would have to venture far beyond the limitations of the individual self to find the oneness of their Higher Self. Here they would find themselves One with everything in existence. Here they would find lasting happiness and true peace of mind.

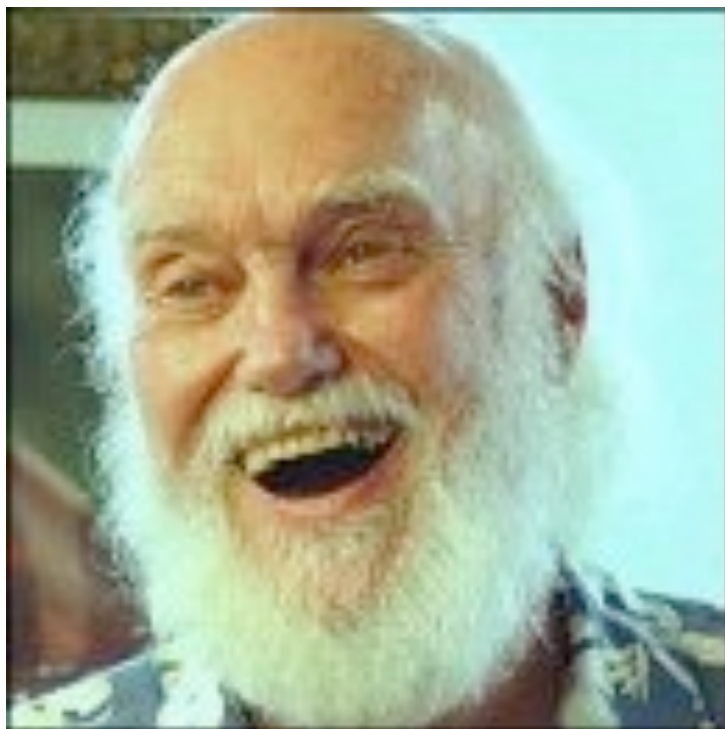
But before I comment on your other points I want to explain where I am, and how I got here.

We both grew up without a father or even a grandfather for that matter. Since our mother worked long swing shifts as a waitress, there were many days in which we never saw her at all. But what we lost in not having a father figure, or a full time mom, we gained in a freedom few children ever experience. We could go anywhere and return at any time. We could explore the world and try to quench our unquenchable curiosities. We could spend summer days just fishing and summer nights sleeping out under the stars and wondering: “does it go on forever and forever?”





One of the earliest things I learned as a child was the Western concept of god as both creator and ruler of the universe. But I was put off by the notion that he was always looking over my shoulder and judging my actions and thoughts. There was an alternate view called science which had the concept that I was just an accident, and had only a brief existence. Somewhere around this time I made the conscious decision that I didn't really care who was right, I just wanted to be happy. So I looked around for the happiest beings I could find, past or present, and it soon became apparent that the ones they called mystics were by far the most ecstatic beings on the planet. You could hear it in their words. You could see it in their faces.





And while mystics were rare in the religions of the West, they sprouted like weeds in the traditions of the East. And so that's where I went searching for the secret of happiness. And I found it. It was the Tao, about which is said:

*"A man who understands the Tao in the morning,  
May die, without regret, in the evening."*                      *Confucius*

The Taoist were funny people who lived in ancient China. They had two basic qualities. They did not trust "words" to describe Nature because words break things up, and Nature operates as a whole. And they felt you should not interfere with Nature, but rather always go with the flow. They felt that by taking the path of least resistance, and tacking into the wind, so to speak, you could still get what you wanted, but without any force.

I will try to summarize what I feel the mystics are saying about the human condition and the way back to happiness. Although they are the first to admit that this is something that can never be put into words.

They start by saying, true happiness and bliss cannot be found in faith or belief systems. They emphasize that only in the direct experience of the Source or Reality behind all appearances can true peace of mind be found. You see, the problem with beliefs and opinions is that they all take place within the thinking mind, and Reality cannot be captured within the limitations of thought. So mystics don't have beliefs as such, and don't feel the need to explain anything.

The original problem, as mystics see it, was that in developing the ability to think and become self aware, humans suffered both a gain and a loss. By substituting words and concepts for Reality, they could communicate, store knowledge, and anticipate the future. But unfortunately, thinking separates the world through a process of naming and labeling. The thinking process breaks a seamless Reality into small bits and pieces. But Reality is a whole, and cannot be separated into parts. And of course, the minute you label a thing as a tree or as a person, it becomes a dead concept, a lifeless thing. And your view is constricted because thoughts are limited to a single file flow. They can never capture Reality, which happens all-at-once.

Now every time you identify an object as being separate from yourself, it reinforces the illusion that there is a separate "you" aware of the objects. This feeling of separateness is the ego. It doesn't really exist as a separate identity, but it is who most people think they are. They buy into the ego's false sense of self. People mistake the ability to stand aside, and observe themselves as separate, as being the same thing as actually being separate.

Because egos feel separate, they take on a life of their own. In truth, egos have no pride and will do anything to survive. But they are constantly forced to defend and define themselves, and worse, they are in constant fear of death. That's why at the deepest level, egos are unhappy and suffer. And every time a new opinion, belief, preference, like or dislike, is added to the mind,

the ego gets stronger, while its fears grow greater. After awhile, this becomes a huge waste of psychic energy.

Although concepts cannot describe Reality they can act as pointers. Words like: “Reality,” “God,” “Consciousness,” “Awareness,” “Love,” “Enlightenment,” “Tao,” “the Void,” “What-Is,” are all pointers.

Concepts are always formed in pairs of opposites. This apparent splitting of Reality is called dualism. But reality cannot be split. Everything is intimately joined through a process of interconnectedness and interpenetration. The dualism that most sustains the ego’s structure is that of “desire” and “fear.” And so it’s also the dualism that is the source of all the world’s suffering.

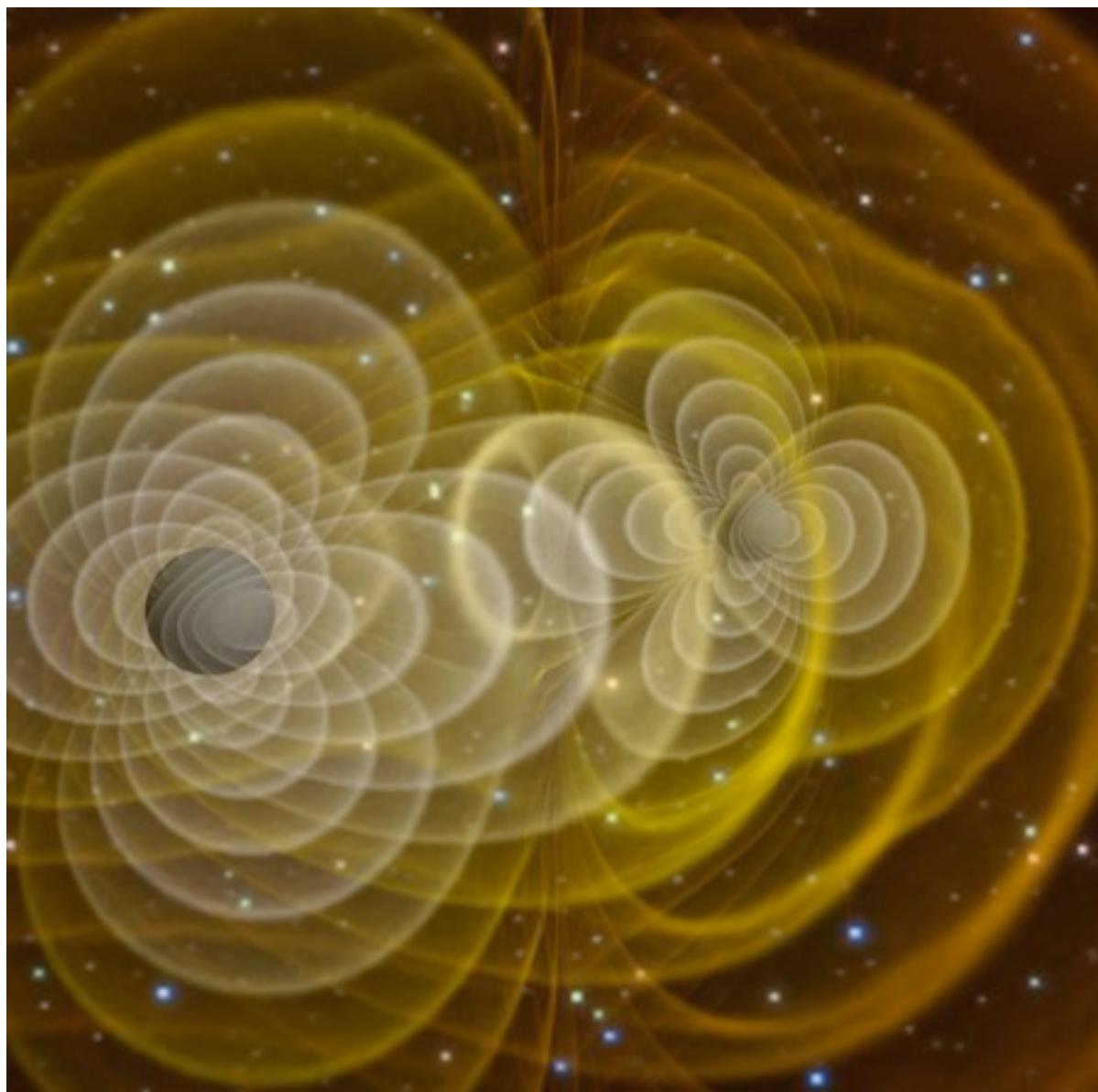
Beliefs are concepts that are held tightly by the ego. They separate you from the direct experiencing of Reality.

The mystics say that only when concepts and beliefs are transcended, can true union with Reality take place. It’s in the giving up of opinions, for or against things, that Joy and Bliss are experienced. It’s in the giving up of attachments to the objects of the world that true Freedom is found. Then you become the Awareness of the concepts, not the concepts. You realize you are the Consciousness of the objects, not the objects themselves. You are the Space that allows all this to happen. This Higher Self has always been there, hidden behind the ego. You are the Divine Self that is birthless and deathless and encompasses all of existence. You are the Eternal.



Most people feel they are an entity that moves through time because they can remember a past and anticipate a future. But time itself is a concept. There is only the Present, or Now moment. All memories of the “past” are happening right now. All anticipations of the “future” are happening in this same Now moment. But because of the constant flow of thoughts about the “past” and “future” humans rarely experience the eternal Now and therefore are lost in the illusions of time. As you become more Present, and live more and more in the Now, you start to experience a world where everything is new. It’s as if you are being reborn, each and every moment, into the exciting worlds of discovery and exploration you enjoyed as a child.

The ego dominated mind would have you believe that it is the source of your thoughts. But you are bigger than your thoughts because something else is Aware of them. Something watches them as they go by. This hidden Observer is who you really are. But you can never “know” what it is because it is the Knower. Just as a finger cannot touch itself, Awareness can never become aware of itself. But by suspending thought, it can be experienced directly as the Spaciousness in which all things happen. It is the blank canvass, upon which everything takes place.





But I don't feel it is necessary to put the ego to death, as you suggest. After all, it is our software for operating at this level of consciousness, and it can be a useful tool. It's more a matter of not letting it become our master, but seeing through its illusions so that it can become our servant. While Western religions want to change the individual's belief systems, Eastern religions want to change consciousness itself. They want to change the way you experience yourself and the world around you. They don't require "beliefs" in anything. Beliefs only strengthen the ego's hold on your mind. But by changing the conscious way you perceive yourself, so that you no longer feel isolated and separate from the world, you gain freedom from the ego. In truth, you are no different from the Source of all that is or ever will be. You are pure Spirit and cannot be diluted by the appearance of things.

You feel you are an observer somehow set apart from the world. You feel you are something that has experiences. That they *happen* to you. But both the experiencer and the thing experienced arise together as one *experiencing*. There's no separation between "you" as observer and "you" as the thing observed. You are the *observing*. You are the *experiencing*. You are the *happening*. You are the *living process*.

Odd as it may sound, each being actually evokes a separate universe through the nature of their senses. You are translating a world of different vibrating frequencies into states of your own consciousness. But it's all happening within your head. No one really knows what's out there. Even worse, the ego tries to freeze what is a constantly changing flux of outside events into a set of words or concepts. But it's not really Reality. Reality is always changing, never the same, and cannot be captured by any set of words. Reality just Is.





It is sad that most human beings feel themselves to be small limited egos trapped inside a body that's destined to die out from under them. But as children, this is what our parents and society taught us, and so our minds were conditioned to believe this. But without the support of thoughts like this, an egoless state emerges where you feel there is no difference between what happens to you and what you are. In this Spaciousness, you no longer feel like a victim of life, because now you are Life itself.

The Grateful Dead were reflecting this mystical idea when they sang: *"Wake up and find out that you are the eyes of the world."* The mystic view is that all individual I's are the Universe, eyeing itself, through billions of different points of view.



The problem with the Garden of Eden story is that it takes a natural, positive development in the evolution of human consciousness and tries to turn it into a negative. All religions have some sort of “creation story” that explains how the One become the many. How the Unmanifested becomes the manifest. How the formless becomes form. But most see this as a natural thing that had to happen in order for there to be anything at all.

Why call it “the fall of Man?” Why lay such a heavy guilt trip on the creative process? Why create a false problem, and then offer a false solution? There was no problem to begin with, and no solution is needed now.

The worst part of this story is that the concepts of “shame” and “disobedience” that it creates only serve to strengthen the ego through feeling of guilt. And it’s also unfair because egos have no real “free will” to begin with. They operate from within a conditioned mind that has no control. Even if egos did have free will, the part of the story I never understood as a child was, why give Conscious “free will” and then demand that it make “right” choices? There’s no free will in that.

In the Eastern view there are no right or wrong choices. You cannot make a mistake in this game. That’s because the “you” that makes choices is the same “You” that is the Self of the World. They don’t see the world as created by an outside force. They view matter and the universe as being self forming. The world is organic to them, much like a plant or flower, and grows from the inside out. Therefore, Man and Nature have no boss. Or more accurately, you yourself at some level are the boss.

Of course your choices will have consequences and will determine what follows. Actions produce effects. If you cause unpleasantness to others now, you can expect to receive unpleasantness later on. It’s called Karma. But since you are the timeless Source, nothing in life or death can really hurt you. That’s the good news all the mystics are trying to tell you – the real “you” was never born and can never die. (Although as egos, you can forget this for awhile.)

It is in surrendering to “what is” that you can return to the serenity of the Now moment. By accepting yourself and the world around you just as you both are, you free yourself from the ego’s concepts of time and space. And more importantly, this freedom is available Now. You don’t have to wait until the body dies in order to find this happiness which is Heaven. To have to wait to be happy, is to be held in bondage.

There is nothing you can “do” to awaken from your dream of separateness and “achieve” this state of Enlightenment. However, there are practices like meditation, mindfulness, direct seeing, witnessing, self remembering, and being present in the Now moment, which can all allow the space and silence in which Enlightenment can happen on its own.

If you go inward and just surrender, all suffering ends.  
If you quiet the mind and accept all that is, the veils separating you from your true Self will thin out.

You might ask: “How will I know I have arrived at the real thing? How will I know this is the actual Experience of Awakening, Awareness, Enlightenment, Consciousness, ‘God’, Reality, or whatever you want to call it, and not just another concept, or pointer?” You know because unlike concepts and pointers, this state has no opposite.

Now you exist as Choiceless Awareness.  
Now you silently observe the world without comment.  
Now you are spaciousness, now you are the One...  
Now everything happens on its own.

*“Sitting quietly,  
Doing nothing,  
Spring comes,  
And the grass grows by itself.”*

*The Zenrin*





## Steve's Reply:

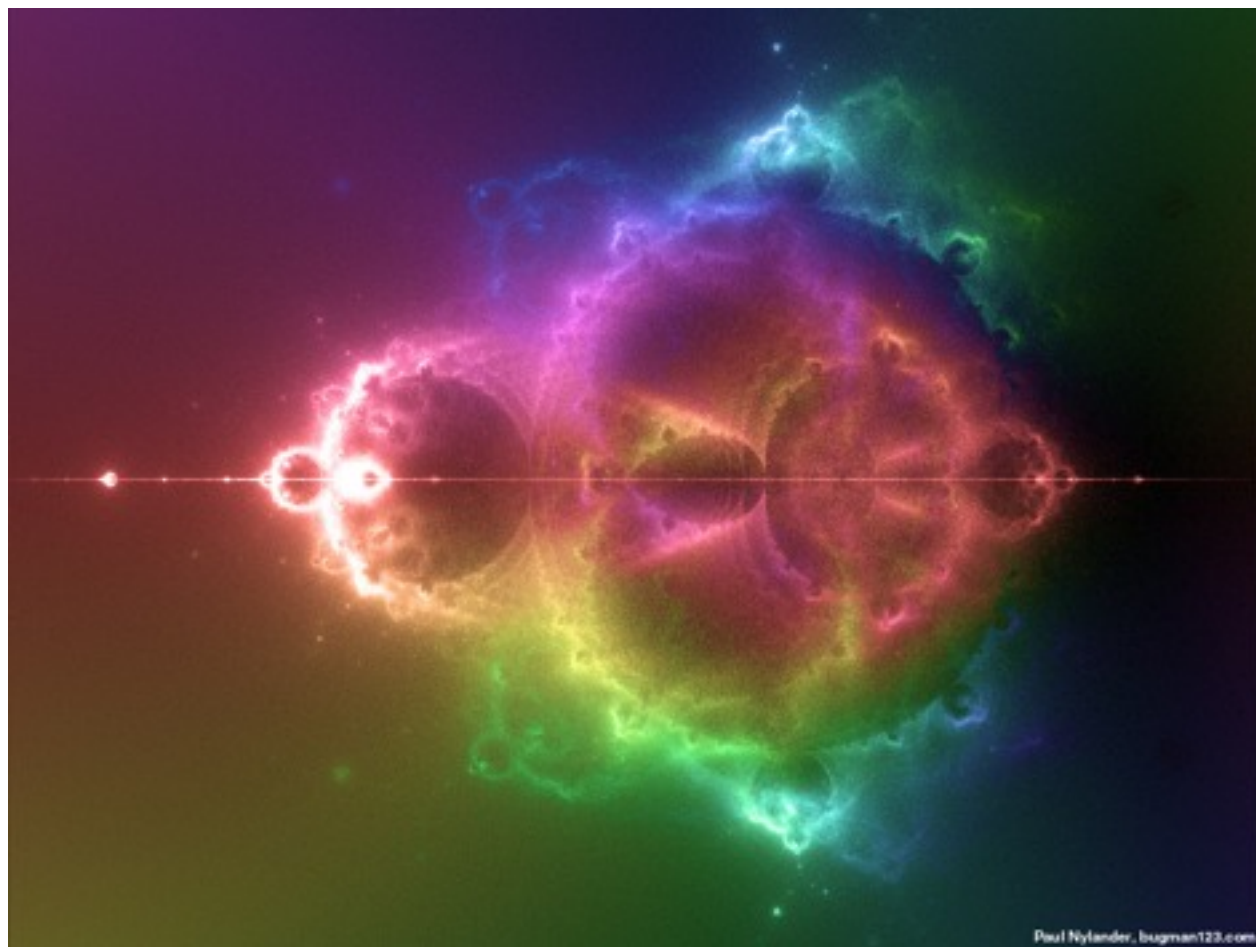
I find it very interesting: the path you took, and how early you chose it. Your reasons are also interesting, in that happiness was your compass, from the start of your spiritual quest. I hadn't realized that you were unhappy. I knew Frank, our brother, became very unhappy before being diagnosed with Schizophrenia. Frank used to blame Grandmother, for many years, for his condition.

Our lack of a father did have a profound affect on each of our lives, yet in surprisingly different ways. Clearly the lack of a father resulted in freedom during our adolescence, and early teens, which we could never have had otherwise; but that freedom came after several years of **Grandmother** taking care of us, while our mother worked; several years of much pain.

When you described being "put off" by the notion that God was always looking over your shoulder, and judging your actions and your thoughts, I thought immediately of Grandmother. Grandmother was always looking over our shoulders, and judging our actions and our thoughts. She would even spy on us, trying to catch us doing things wrong. I think, to you, the notion of "God," was Grandmother, only bigger and meaner. I don't blame you for looking for something else.

For me, the Journey was to find answers to so many Questions.

My search was for TRUTH.



The first question I remember came as I watched the Sun go down just over the hill behind our house. I could see that the hill was not very far away, and the Sun would go down just on the other side. I would imagine what it would look like if I climbed up that hill and watched it set down. I wondered, what would it look like up close?? It was like a big bright orange ball when it got low in the sky.



Then the Question began to stir in me; how do they get the Sun back to the other side??? I saw that it always went only one way. I couldn't figure out how they got the Sun back each night.

I would lay awake imagining a conveyor system of some kind, moving the Sun under the ground, back to the other side; but I couldn't work it through in my mind. I asked you and Frank, who were both older than me. You didn't know either.

Our mother responded by giving me a book on astronomy for my birthday, when I was way too young to read much of it; but I grew into it. It explained so many things, and sparked in me a love for science in general, and Astronomy in particular. I fell in love with learning, and exploring; I fell in love with the Universe.

I never considered whether I was happy or not. I found life interesting, and full, and was always exploring some new place, or learning some new thing. I used to find out from Frank as soon as he got home from school, what new thing he had learned in math; I was always ahead of my class in math. Happiness was never something I pursued, or even thought about; I just enjoyed life and learning. It was all about discovery, and a deeper understanding.

After we were out from under our grandmother's switch, our lives became much better, and much freer. The world view I found presented by science, captured my mind, throughout my teenage years. I became confident in the Atheist's world view. I even enjoyed debating Christians. I believed that all the mysteries of Nature could be explained by the laws of physics. I believed that every thing that is, resulted by natural laws and cause and affect.

Then one day, I saw **IT** !! I saw it first in a flowering weed; but it affected everything. I saw a quality I had completely taken for granted. A quality that every thing has: **Existence**. It was as if the flower was saying "I AM," In a flash I understood that cause and affect could not explain why anything **existed**. I discovered much later that this also bothered Einstein, who said that logically **nothing** should exist. At that very moment, as I beheld this humble weed, declaring existence, I realized that existence itself had to have been caused by some **Ultimate Source**. I also realized that the inherent **beauty** of natural things pointed to the obvious suggestion that the cause (or Source) was **LOVE**. Not man's love, often short sighted or self serving, but Pure LOVE.





From that day on I began a spiritual quest to connect with that Great LOVE out of which all things come. I searched in many ways, including Taoism, Buddhism, and yoga. I even looked into the psychic realms: Palmistry, and Numerology, and Astrology.

But as you well know, it was during the five and a half months I spent in jail, awaiting trial for drug charges, that I finally found the path I was seeking, or rather the path found me.

The path I found and remain on, as you know, is **Jesus**, who declares Himself to be the **WAY** to the “Father,” the **TRUTH** that sets us free, and the **LIFE** Eternal.

You have well presented your World view, the “Mystics” view. It is a persuasive argument in many ways. And there is much of it that I agree with.

I agree that most people are not able to experience Reality directly, because they cannot escape the trap of their own minds. And that people feel unfulfilled, because they have no connection with **Reality**.

I also agree that we have a Higher Self, which is one with everything in existence.

Above all else, I completely agree with your fundamental point, of living in the moment. Being in the moment is a most desirable state of mind, which I would call Zen.

Recent discoveries in brain research confirms something I have long suspected: the right brain's experience of reality is that of the enlightened state. The right brain is always experiencing the timeless moment, in which every thing is connected; every thing is one whole being. This is usually drowned out, as you have well described, by the constant chatter in the left brain, the rational mathematical verbal side of our brain, with which we most identify. You call it the ego, and suggest the Eastern approach. The Eastern approach **has** brought you methods of how to experience the moment. An experience, as I have said, which is a most desirable State of Mind.

But the Eastern approach has brought you much “more” than just a method to be aware of the timeless experience of the moment. It has also given you an Eastern paradigm. You experience being everything, because that's how the right brain is “wired,” and conclude that you are everything. You experience the Source, and conclude that you are the Source.

But since you are not the Source for me, and there is only one Source, I don't believe that you are your own source either. We each have the same source, since there is only one Source; and when I connect to the Source, I connect to everything, including you. But I am not you, and I am not the Source. I am only an earthen vessel containing the treasure. I am not the treasure itself. I am only a hollow reed being played by the wind, not the wind itself. But when I surrender, the wind can play **its music** through me. And we can dance together as one.

You have said that I am pure spirit, and I could not agree with you more. I am spirit; and you are spirit; but we each have a body, a different body, that we are **personally** responsible for. We each are directly responsible for the activities of, what most of us call, **our own** bodies, and no one else's. And we learn early in life, hopefully, that what we do with our body has consequences; even as you have said, “your choices will have consequences and will determine what follows.” You might call this “mutual arising” if you like, but clearly this is an example of cause and affect, as well as a demonstration of free will, since the choice is up to you personally.

You said, “The **original problem**, as the mystics see it, was that in developing the ability to think and become self aware, humans suffered a gain and a loss.” But, then you question the Biblical account of the Garden of Eden story by saying, “Why create a false **problem**, and then offer a false solution? There was **no problem** to begin with and no solution is needed now.” Yet you offer a solution. Clearly, you and I, and the Bible, agree on the fact that there is a **problem**.

You describe the problem as man's attachment to the ego. The Bible calls it the “**old man**.” You suggest freeing ourselves from the attachment of the ego. The Bible suggests Deliverance from our selfish nature, deliverance from the **old man**, through Christ.

You question, “why give consciousness ‘free will’ and then demand that it make ‘right’ choices?” Saying “there is no free will in that.” But then later you say, “Of course your choices will have consequences and will determine what follows.”

So why were we given free will, if when we don't choose well we “receive unpleasantness later on?” It’s because, it is this **free will**, this freedom of choice, which makes it possible for us to **Love our Creator**. Without this freedom of choice, we would merely do as we are programmed to do. In animals we call this instinct. It is because of the **gift of free will** that we can choose to love Our Maker, rather than it being the result of instinct, or evolution, or Natural Law.

The risk of having free will is the possibility that we will do something stupid, or destructive. But **without free will, we could not consciously surrender to the Source**.



Ron's Reply:



I liked the image of the flowering weed that spoke to you. I've never had an experience like that. Those are the really cool Ah-Ha moments that effect an entire life time. It sounds like your experience had all the elements in it: - Existence – I AM – Love.

I remember once hearing it said that the beauty of things, like flowers, must point to an intelligent Creator behind them. But you could also say that the beauty of a flower IS the Intelligence itself, shinning out from within.



I must admit I thought this project might be coming to an end, but it appears we still have some “loose ends to tie up.” That’s one of the sayings our grandmother, Pearl, used to say. As you pointed out, she certainly had an effect on us three brothers growing up. She was pretty much old school when it came to discipline. I remember she used to stand us in the corner when we got too noisy. I mostly spent those periods thinking about how much I hated her and wishing I could run away. But such wishes always ended with the same thought, “and then what?” Looking back, though, I’m sure she was just doing the best she could.

I do regret that I never got to know her better or learn her personal story. I rarely even talked to her after we moved out. I did learn that she had worked really hard most of her life. This was in part because her husband, Harry, had a drinking problem. And then after she left him she found herself having to raise her daughter’s three boys. Even for someone with her patience, we three high energy kids must have been very trying.



I saw her that last week of her life. It's really remarkable how healthy she remained into her 95<sup>th</sup> year. I had driven over to mom's place with the family for a one day visit. At some point in the evening I found myself standing outside her open bedroom door. She was on oxygen and sitting in her chair reading a book. Then she sighed and laid down the book for a moment. I knew this was the pause I had been waiting for in which I could go in and finally tell her how I felt. I wanted to tell her that I sympathized with the way it had been back when she raised us, and that I harbored no ill feelings. But I could not find the strength. I'm sure one of the reasons I didn't go in was that I had already started drinking that evening and I didn't want face something that would bring me down. You may not know this, but alcohol and I go all the way back to when I was just 14 years old. I learned early on its magical powers to transport me to happy places. And although I have since run across many other substances that can produce pleasant states, alcohol has proven to be the hardest to come to terms with. As for that missed opportunity with grandmother, I have always felt bad about not telling her how I loved her. I vowed not to let that happen with our mother, Iola, or our step father, Bert.



You mentioned our brother Frank. I see him a couple times a year when I visit the halfway house where he lives. He says he is happy, and it does appear that the State is taking care of his needs. I am glad for him because it took a long time for him to finally find a place where he feels happy.

I remember reading somewhere that if you look into the eyes of an enlightened being, you get the feeling there's no one home. That's the kind of feeling I get when I look into Frank's eyes.

But he was like that even when we were growing up. He was also much wiser than I was. I remember when he was about 14, I asked him what the meaning of life was, and he said: "It's God's attempt to know himself." That answer impressed me at the time, as well as the fact that he could solve those Zen Koans, which to this day, I'm no good at. It's interesting, but in India people like him are generally referred to as "Masts," which means God-mad or God-merged men. It's funny the way the same appearance can have two very different responses from people. There they revere these beings as being God-possessed, and say their minds are no longer their own, while in this country, we usually lock them up, and call them insane. In Frank's case, I've always suspected him of being what the Buddhists call a Bodhisattva. According to them, these are beings who have obtained Buddhahood or enlightenment, or whatever you want to call it, and could simply drop out of the world of form, but they do not. Instead, they choose to hang back for the purpose of helping other beings to awaken. But it's my impression there's something else going on here. In fact, these beings remind me of the old court jesters that kings used to keep around for entertainment. Those jesters were so skilled and clever that they could make fun of the king in front of the whole court, and get away with it. Clowns can be tricky fellows. It is said that the Bodhisattvas play their roles so well that you would not recognize them. They could be your mailman, your mother, or the town whore. You'd never know because they don't come on as being anybody special. Of course there's a basic contradiction in all this. They admit that the number of beings is infinite, and yet they vow not to go on until all beings have gone before them. So what's this game all about? It's as if they want to stay behind, and just hang out forever in form. Could they be playing a balancing game right at the edge where the Unmanifested becomes manifest? Kind of like being in the world but not of it. But then Buddhism itself is a puzzle in that they say all beings are already the enlightened Buddha, they just don't know it. If that's the case, then what's the point of striving to become something you already are? Is perhaps the journey actually the destination?





Your experience in jail is particularly interesting because I have always felt that there are no accidents in life. Not only are there no accidents, but there's nothing ultimately good or bad that happens to us. It's quite common that the things that may appear to be bad luck or a loss at one point end up being a gain later on. It's usually a matter of being able to use the opportunity to your advantage. The fact that the experience while in jail led you to the discovery of Jesus and the spiritual truths you had always searched for is a good example of this. But I've also found the reverse to be true. With every gain usually comes a loss of some kind. I see this in the development of the human ego. It was a gain for survival in that it brought about the ability to think and learn from our experiences. It also leads to the ability to create literature, art and music. But with civilization also came feelings of separateness and a loss of the oneness we once shared with existence. And I don't mean this just from a species point of view. I feel this cycle of alienation happens with each human birth. We are born into a world where all is new and we feel a union with it, but as the ego develops, we become more and more isolated. At the same time life loses its freshness and we become jaded. Eventually we are older and so full of memories that life itself starts to lose its luster. Fortunately, there are cycles where memories are cleaned away and a forgetting takes place which allows a rebirth and renewal. Jesus talks about becoming as little children. The beauty of a child's eye is it allows seeing new and exciting worlds once again.



We both shared an early love of science, but I too grew disenchanted with it. And while it continues to be a lot of fun and I enjoy the way it seems to answer many questions, it also asks that a lot of things be taken on faith. In that respect it's a lot like most religions. It also makes the mistake of trying to break down the universe and reduce it to simple parts. But I feel reality functions as a whole. You mentioned science's approach to the human brain and religious experiences. That's an example of the kind of reductionism I am talking about for it would reduce mystical experiences to right brain-left brain operations. In reality, I believe the brain functions more like a hologram in a holographic universe. I view it as being like the receiver of psychic and cosmic energy rather than the originator of it. Sort of like the ability of a TV receiver to pick up and translate signals into sights and sounds. In a similar manner, I see our brains as converting a universe made up of different vibrating frequencies into our individual takes on reality.

Another similarity between science and most religions is that it seeks to find absolute truth. But for me all truths are relative and rely on what each individual determines the truth to be. I've always liked the pragmatic approach which says, if it works, it's true. After all, what good is another's truth if it doesn't work for you?

So the pragmatic approach is also the one I use with spiritual matters and it seems to work for me. It has brought me a form of religious understandings that continues to give the happiness and peace of mind I sought. But I can't explain how or why it works. Take the issue of "free will" which you have brought up several times. I wish I was as good with words as many of the spiritual beings I see around me because this is a complex question. What makes it so difficult to discuss is that it appears paradoxical. And the reason for this has to do with the nature of "dualism." I define dualism as the breaking up of the world into pairs of opposites. Literally it means "two." Religions like Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are generally considered dualistic because they think in terms such as: God & Man, Creator & Creation, Mind & Matter, and Good & Evil. Dualism is also the way the human mind is forced to handle thoughts in a logical manner. But it is important to realize that the term "non-dual" does not mean the opposite of dualism. That would be just another dualism. Non-dual signifies a state that has gone beyond thinking in terms of opposites and rests in Unity. Examples of religions that are based on non-dualism are Buddhism, Taoism, Vedanta Hinduism, and Zen.

Now within the logic of thoughts, two things that are opposite cannot both be true at the same time. If they are it is called a paradox. But in non-dualism you avoid the paradox. Take the original question: Do we have free will in making choices? I would say the answer is both: Yes and No. It all depends from what level the choices are being made, and which "you" is making them. If you feel that you are "making choices" you are in a place where you don't have free will. You are free, but you don't have free will. I know that sounds odd, but as long as you want something, any something, you are not free, because you will continue to see only the outward container. In other words, our desires and fears distort our perceptions. There's an old Taoist saying that the truth waits for eyes unclouded by longing. So true free will takes place when you

feel that life is just happening to you, where you are just watching it all go by like so much passing show. You're just watching to see how it all turned out.

For me God is formless and non-dual and therefore God is free. Awareness is also formless and non-dual and as long as you remain Aware, you are free. But within the duality of form, you have to manifest as the lawfully unfolding universe in which everything is related through Karma. Karma just means "action." It is obvious that each person's actions affect everything around them. And unfortunately, it is the nature of egos that they suffer from an imagined control and the belief that they are making choices. But in reality, egos are just running stuff off unconsciously. They are programmed to respond in certain ways. And what are egos made up of? They are based on our memories, preferences, opinions and beliefs systems. So if someone knew enough about you and your history, they could predict how you would choose. It's only when you are choiceless that you have true freedom.

In order to take in all of what's happening in the Here and Now you have to operate at all levels of the game which include both the dual and the non-dual. And it is definitely not an easy thing to open your mind wide enough to make room for paradoxes like free will verses choiceslessness. What's more, to rest in the place of choicelessness is to be conscious of the fact that there is no doer of the deeds. You still have the relative experience of doing the actions, but at the same time, there's the feeling that there's no separate "you" doing them. Another way of saying this is that you no longer identify yourself with the fruits of your labor. I believe it is this understanding which allows for true compassionate actions towards others.





I have come to realize that when it comes to spiritual truths, they are not based so much on what a person says, as the level of understanding from which the person says it. So when it comes to a term like non-dualism, the question becomes, can you describe it using the dualisms of language and thought to those who want to know it? And of course the answer is no, you cannot. I once heard the analogy that this would be like trying to describe the taste of an angel food cake to someone who has never tasted it. There's just no way. Therefore, the strategy that enlightened masters use is to present the questioner with a recipe for baking their own cake, and telling them that if they follow the instructions carefully enough, they will be able to experience the taste for themselves. They give you methods for obtaining the experience, but warn you that once you get it, don't get hooked on the method. Throw away the scriptures. Turn your back to the teacher.

Now to say that the world of non-dualism is also the realm of choicelessness makes it sound like you live your life as some sort of predetermined zombie. But this is not the case. I am aware that most people think of freedom as meaning the freedom to choose, but from a spiritual point of view, freedom means not having to choose. What one finds is that there is actually a liberating quality in no longer having to choose between opposites. It's a middle of the road approach that seeks to unify life rather than divide it.



For me this journey has a self correcting feel to it. As if the whole system is designed as a teaching. It's both gentle and loving in this regard. It's also infinitely patient. Call it what you will: God, Allah, Brahman, Love, Source, Suchness, Void, Tao, Higher Self, or Zen, or none of the above. It all seems the same to me. And although I have no idea where it's all going, I find joy and comfort in the not knowing. After all, a future known would be the past. So to have a future at all, it has to remain unknown.



Steve's Reply,

You have raised a number of issues I want to respond to:

I have not grown disenchanted with Science, as you apparently have. Science has its place, but only in the context of the physical, or manifested Universe. The nonphysical, is beyond the reach of science. If, as some believe, the physical universe is all that is, then science is the best tool to understand reality. Science combines observation, or direct experience, as you call it with the testing of whatever insight, or hypotheses follows from the observation. Scientific theories result when someone's idea withstands testing by experimentation. "The proof is in the pudding," as they say. Science is very pragmatic, in this respect. Scientific theories are only as good as their proof. And Science is self correcting, in that a theory may be held for thousands of years, and yet be over turned, by a single experiment which proves it wrong. Scientific theories are, therefore only relatively true, and only true at the moment; a theory proven to be true today, could be proven untrue tomorrow. It is impossible to know for sure, that any theory will stand the test of time. Though some theories, like the theory of electromagnetism, are so practical in their uses that it hardly matters whether we ever learn the ultimate truth about the electron.

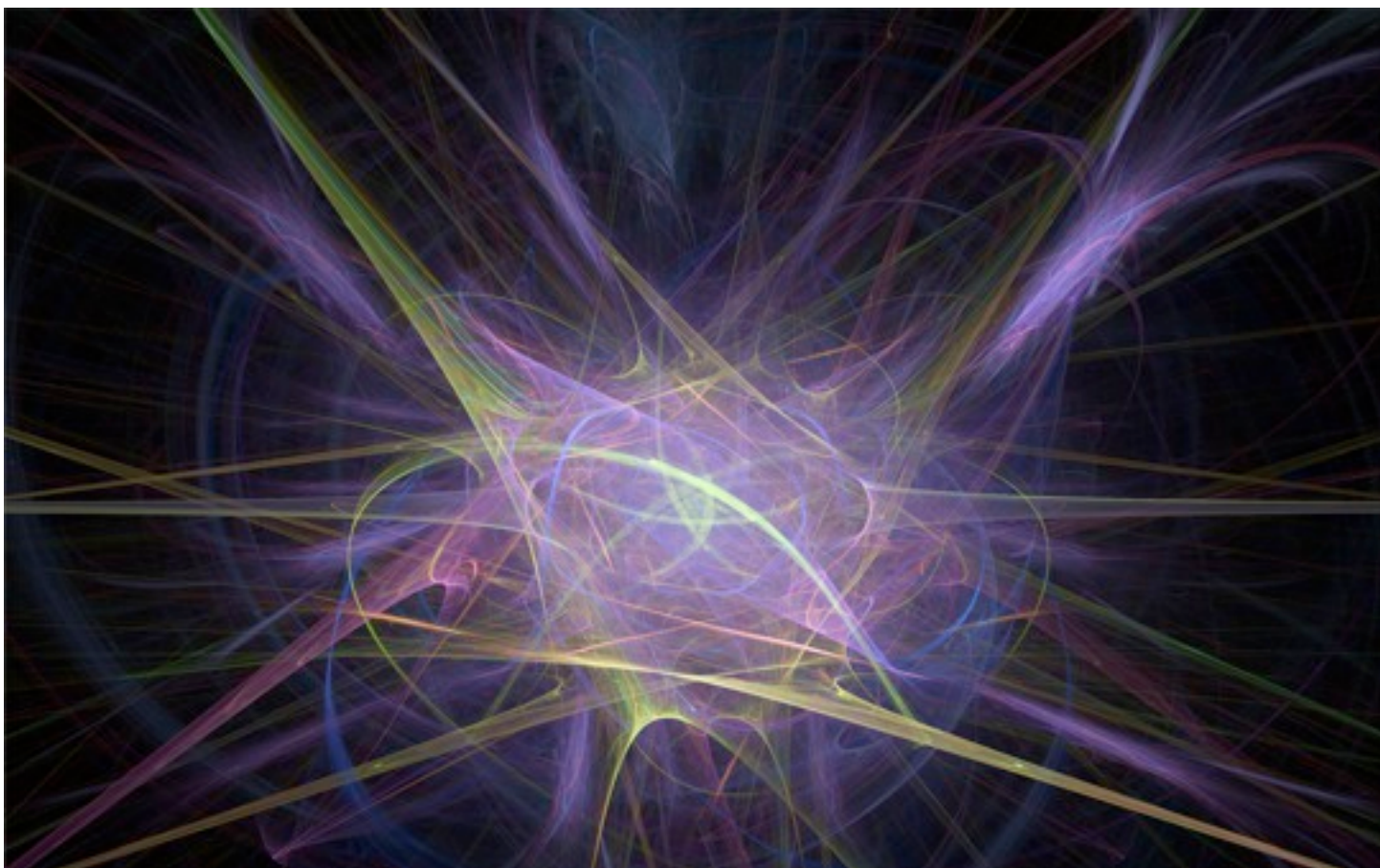
Christianity is also very pragmatic. The Bible challenges us to "**Prove all things**, cleave to that which is good."(1Thessalonians 5:21 ). God, speaking through the prophet Malachi (3:10) says ..."prove me now herewith, sayeth the LORD of hosts, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that your house cannot contain." Psalms 34:8 says, "**taste and see that the LORD is good.**" It was the LOVE that I saw, and tasted, that drew me to seek the one true **SOURCE**. And it is the faithfulness of Jesus, in my life for the last forty years, which has strengthened my faith in GOD. I still pray to GOD, because I too am a pragmatist, and I see results.





Is the Universe the SOURCE, having brought itself into being, along with you and me, or is the Universe just a manifestation of the SOURCE? Would there be any way to tell the difference?? Since we are also of the “stuff” of the Universe, along with our tools and instruments, it would be impossible to tell by any observation or measurements, whether we or anything else are “real,” or made of any real stuff. The only way we would ever be able to know, is if the SOURCE revealed the TRUTH to us.

The Holy Bible is just such a revelation, and declares that the Universe, you, and me are all made by the ONE that made ALL THINGS (matter/ energy, and space/ time, as well as their opposites).



Unlike some, that equate questions with doubt, or discourage the reasoning mind, the LORD in Isaiah 1:18,19 says “**Come now, and let us reason together**, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool. **If ye be willing**, and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.”

This does require free will, and a choice to be made. And it assumes that you would prefer the good of the land, to the not so good.



This brings me to your bewildering views on free will, and our freedom to make choices. When a child is asked by his mother, “What would you like for dinner?” Should the child remain choiceless, as you suggest, having no preferences or wants? Should he remain silent? I suppose, to be polite he could say “it doesn't matter,” even if it did; and his mother, being motivated by **Love**, and not by hate, would still fix something good; and the child would eat it, and probably like it. So maybe it really doesn't matter that much; but when given the choice, shouldn't he choose?

Of course you are right, that with every choice, and the gain that comes with it, **there is a loss**. If I were that child and I said “spaghetti and meatballs and garlic bread,” then my loss would be the pork chops, or meatloaf, or steak and eggs, or every other possible food. My choice, once made, eliminates all other choices. One moment all possible choices are mine. I could have anything; and then boom, everything changes in a flash. All that remains is spaghetti, and meatballs, and garlic bread.



Of course I could have chosen the pork chops, or meatloaf, but then I would have lost the spaghetti, the thing I really wanted. So is it better not to choose, or to choose what we want, and accept the loss?

What if the choice is between Life or Death? Most people would choose Life. Perhaps it doesn't matter to you, since you see death as merely the "other side of the same coin," But, "the Father," as Jesus called him, is **LIFE**, and He is "not the God of the dead, but of the **living**." (Luke 20:38). He says in (Deuteronomy 30:19) that He has set before us Life and Death, and He encourages us to choose Life. So shouldn't we choose LIFE?

There is no better example of this principle (that with choosing, and the gain that comes with it, there is also a loss), than Paul of Tarsus in Philippians 3:8-11, when he says "...I count all things to be loss, in view of the surpassing **value** of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom **I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ**, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead."

So, yes it is true, as you have said, "with every gain there is a loss," so do we remain **choiceless**, or do we choose wisely, weighing the gain against the loss?





But what about those who don't believe the Bible?

Paul tells us: "... that which is known about God is evident within them; for **God made it evident to them**. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been **clearly seen**, being understood through what has been made, so that they are **without excuse**.

"For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing them selves to be wise they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and birds and four footed animals and crawling creatures.

"Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and **worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen." (Romans 1:15-25)

This is the heart of the matter: freedom is found in **surrender**; but do we surrender to the **Creator**, or to the **Creature**?

Do we worship and serve the **Creator**, or the **Creature**?

If you are right, then it doesn't matter.

If the Bible is right, then it is a matter of life or death, and we are offered LIFE.

"And this is the record that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in the Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."

(1 John 5:11,12)



Ron's Reply,

We are quoting scriptures now; so it's probably time to end.  
I will go first and make this my last response.



You asked about "Love," but like "God," these are just words.  
It's the connection with humans that gives them any meaning.  
So how are we to define the concept of "God" or that of "Love?"  
Without that connection to humans they have no meaning at all.

The problem in this culture with the word "God" is that it is so loaded.  
For most people it brings up many different conceptual systems.  
There's all that baggage from childhood and over 2000 years of old testament Bible.  
Biblical concepts of a God as being a Ruler, a Lord, and a Master.  
He's called A King of Kings. He's the Giver of all Laws. The Creator of Man and all Life.  
He's often referred to as our Father. But one who judges us when we die.  
He's made out to be like a Super Being of some kind.

He is also associated with concepts of heaven or hell.  
I know many would find some of these concepts pretty old fashioned,  
But remnants linger on today.  
And for some, these words are taken quite literally.  
Perhaps that is why some would call it a choice between “Creator and creature.”  
Compared to the Bible’s image of God, mankind must appear like some small “creature.”  
But in my mind that is false because the Source can never be a concept of any kind,  
The source can never be like a Big Daddy in the sky, or some Super Being living next door.  
And life is so much more than anything that was “created” once upon a time.  
For those reasons, I like more neutral words like the “Tao,”  
Or perhaps Buddha’s term, “Suchness.” The Suchness of things.  
In Zen it’s called the “Void” out of which all things come.  
In their view, “The Source hides itself and therefore is only known by its absence.”  
Being a non-concept, a Non-ness of sorts, it cannot be known through words.  
But it can be experienced directly when thought has been silenced.  
That’s why Zen has been called the wordless transmission outside of scripture.  
Zen sees “God” as the depth of things – go deeply enough into a flower’s floweriness, and there  
It is.





I sense that most people feel that they are separate from whatever source created them. Not only that, but they feel separate from the world around them. I do not experience myself as being separate from the world. That's why I can say that my "self-awareness" is also the World's awareness of Itself. And likewise, the Source cannot be separate from me. And so again I can say that my awareness is also the Source's awareness of Itself. And as strange as this may sound, these things can be experienced for yourself.



And so I will give you a simple recipe for experiencing the Source and the nature of Reality. It's called meditation, which means the turning off of thought and the silent observation of the mind. Regardless of what you call yourself spiritually, or what name you give your god, There can only be one Ultimate Source. So the real question is how best to come into direct contact with that.

Meditation still hasn't caught on very big in the West. And it is difficult for most people at the start. They've gone a whole lifetime without even noticing that they are constantly talking to themselves. And as we know from personal experience, when you are talking all the time, you can't hear the other person. To hear the other you have to listen. Meditation is a listening and noticing exactly what's going on. Not only going on inside your head but also going on all around you. It is paying attention to what is. And it can start with as little as 20 minutes twice a day. No special posture is needed, just a comfortable chair or sitting position. I suggest you use the breath as your central focus. Just relax and watch the "in breath" and the "out breath" while quieting the constantly chattering mind. We tend to ceaselessly talk to ourselves. So try giving it all a rest. The idea is to slip out of the thinking mind and settle into that quiet space between any two thoughts. You don't try to stop thinking, Thoughts may come into your mind, like passing clouds or birds chattering on the rooftop, but you simply watch them go by. You are not pulled by them. They do not grab you. You are like a parking lot attendant just watching the cars come and go without comments. Slowly thoughts thin out on their own, and eventually come to a stop. From this clear awareness much wisdom and peace of mind arises. It gives you a stable center from which to operate. It gives you a new sense of happiness and freedom.

At first, when you sit, every little sound or distraction will bother you. And you'll keep finding yourself being lured into long trains of thought about all the things that pop into your head. But after awhile your mind will become calmer and clearer and distractions will just become part of the passing show. Your body will become very relaxed and stress free. You will know the Eternal Now which transcends both the past and future. You will rest in the timeless present moment. You will know peace of mind.





But as nice as these quiet times can be, the real payoff comes when you are able to take your calm center out into the world. You find you can mediate at any time while doing anything and maintain a quiet peaceful stance from which to take on the world. You gain new insights about yourself and the world. And suddenly, peeling potatoes and washing dishes becomes enjoyable. Stay with it long enough and you will transcend the ego and experience Reality directly for the first time. Without thought, the ego cannot exist, and so your true identity will unfold itself. Normally our minds are continuously commenting and judging everyone and everything they meet. But within this quiet and open space the world is met without opinions or judgments. We are free of the usual clinging and condemning. We are no longer bound by a mind that is always grabbing or pushing away things. Only in this egoless space can choices be made freely. And it is this freedom from ego dominance which insures the moment to moment happiness which few people ever experience. Attitudes, opinions, and beliefs all limit life. If you can free yourself from them, life becomes a heaven on earth. One with infinite possibilities.



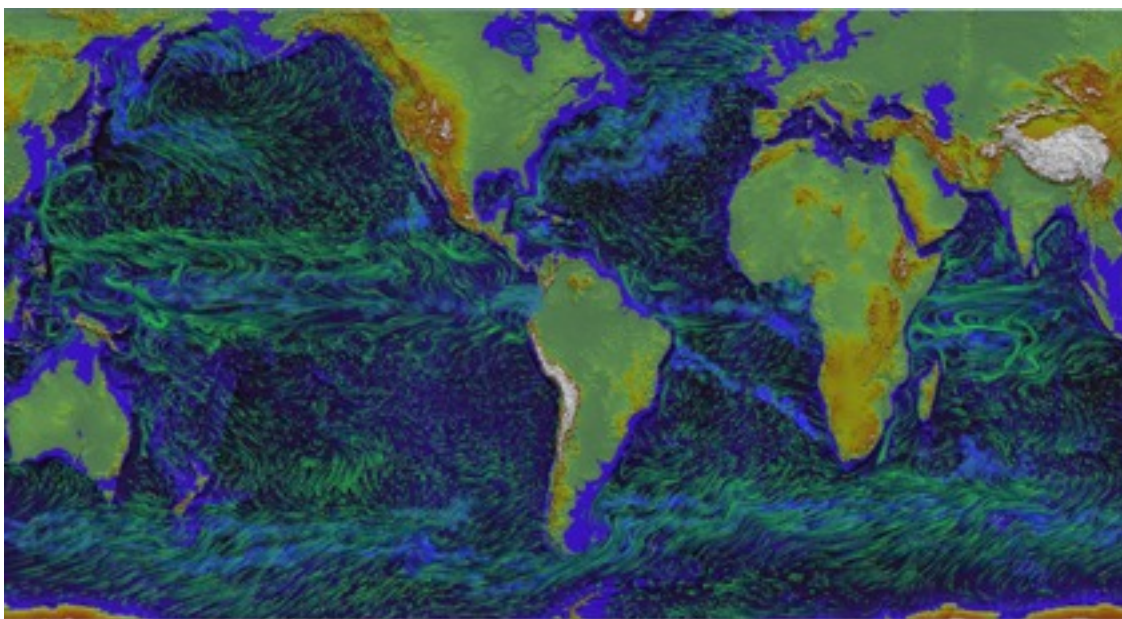
It always surprises me how few people appreciate the relationship between opposites. To a Taoist the war between Life and Death or Creator and Creation is seen as an illusion. All existence is the play of opposites. You can never have just one end of a pole.



It's a universal constant that all things require their opposite in order to exist at all.  
 Not just White and Black or Up and Down;  
 But also things like Truth and False, and Man and God.  
 But it's not a fight or conflict. That's the harmony of the Tao.  
 For deep down they are not opposites but complementary.  
 If two things are always found together, then at some level they are actually united as one process.  
 Even the "gods" can only exist when there is a "creation" present to acknowledge them.  
 Otherwise who would know? Who would care? Who would be there to worship them?  
 So why put man or the creation down as being less than the creative principle?

The same relationship exists for the concepts like Life and Death.  
 It's not a choice between life or death, as you say. Each is known because the other exists as an equal.  
 And we are both of them in alternating cycles.  
 That's the great balance of existence. Some call it Tao.  
 If you'd never been dead, how would you know you are alive?

Think about what it was like before you were born.  
 That unknown blankness before birth is the same as what death looks like to you now.  
 So consider that they are one and the same place.  
 That was the good news Christ tried to bring. That death is not an end.  
 For the soul was never born and can never die.  
 Birth and death are illusions, small episodes in the eternity of life.  
 Upon awakening to this Eternity all fear of death disappears.  
 You find that life is a story played by you at one level,  
 While also being a story written by you at another.  
 Even after you awaken to this truth you honor the game by playing your role.  
 You relax in the knowledge that life is a self correcting system,  
 And so you always go with the flow.



Christ was no more a Christian than Buddha was a Buddhist.  
But his followers created a religion around him.  
A religion in which the cross and death became dominant.  
I've often wondered at what point Jesus realized he was God in the form of Man.  
At some point during his childhood he awoke to his true identity.  
One can only wonder how he would have communicated this if he had lived in darkest Africa.  
Perhaps some obscure tribe that still worshiped Sun gods and believed in Magic.  
But they would have had a language of some kind.  
And he would have tried to explain the joy of being one with the Divine.  
But he also would have had to talk in terms of Sun gods and Magic.  
Nevertheless, he would have tried to spread the good news about the soul's deathlessness.  
He would have encouraged others to experience the kingdom of heaven for themselves.  
The kingdom of heaven which he said lies within, and is always present.  
He would have wanted all beings to experience the same relationship he had with the Divine.  
For it's not a matter of being Man or God but of being both at the same time.  
And that's the same Awakening the Buddha encouraged beings to experience through meditation.  
Buddha taught a method for stepping out of the dualism of life versus death.  
He showed how to transcend the concepts of past and future and reside in the Eternal Now.  
He taught that beings can experience themselves as being one with the world around them.  
Nirvana can be said to be the realization that "Heaven" and "Earth" are one and the same place.  
You experience that form is no other than the formless, and they are both the Source.  
The real bliss of being enlightened is in being at all levels at once.  
Your heart cries out and you want to share this with all suffering beings.



The Christian approach to life has a certain seriousness about it.  
You are expected to take on a belief system within a single life time.  
And this belief system has in it goals and accomplishments you are expected to achieve.  
In addition, it somehow turns existence into a conflict between man's nature and that of god's.  
It goes on to create an inner conflict between your spiritual nature and your basic instincts.  
But if God is all there is, then the Creative Principle is in everyone and everything.  
And all aspects of our nature are spiritual aspects of our nature.

For me, life should be more playful and enjoyed for what it is.  
A set of experiences designed to awaken you from the illusion of separateness.  
Life for me is more like a dance done for its own sake.  
Or like a piece of music played for its own reward.





Some might ask, if we are in reality, the thing which we are seeking, if we are god, in effect, Why go on the journey in the first place? For you end up back where you started?

Why make this circular voyage at all?

Well, without the journey, how would you know that you'd arrived?

You have to be lost before you can be found.

The thrill is in the homecoming and in discovering who you are.

It's in realizing that the world is mind spun, and you alone are the spinner.

It's in awakening to the knowledge that nothing exists outside you.

It's in becoming aware of the cosmic game of tag, in which you suddenly find "you are it!"

And that you have always been it, and that you always will be.

This is where the Bliss lies. This is the desireless state know as Nirvana, it's a state of total rapture.



In some ways it is really simple.  
You need no Scriptures to read or Concepts to believe.  
You only have to find the gap between any two thoughts, and then rest there.  
You only need to give up your preferences for and against things.  
You only need to pay close attention and become aware of “what is.”  
You only need to clear your mind and experience this timeless present moment.



The great Tao flows everywhere, to the left and to the right.  
All things depend upon it to exist, and it does not abandon them.  
To its accomplishments it lays no claim,  
It loves and nourishes all things, but does not lord it over them...  
The Tao, without doing anything leaves nothing undone.

*Lao-tzu*

It is afternoon and I hear distant thunder.  
The sky is darkening, and darkening more.  
I smell rain and feel the cool breeze.  
My heart dances, and dances, and dances some more.



I love this experience, this experience of What Is.  
I love being present, and aware of What Is?  
I love being One.  
Being One with What Is.





P.S.

The inside secret of Buddhism is that there is no “past” or “future,” but only the Present moment.

If you can be present to the Now moment, you are in Eternity, and death is seen as an illusion.

And at the level of being God, we are all birthless and deathless and need not worry.

To me that was the good news that Jesus tried to spread.

He tried to tell people not to fear their death,

That the kingdom of heaven was within.

And that their souls do not die.

That Earth was Heaven

For all its children

Who believe

As He.

But his followers, instead of seeking his religion,  
Made a religion about him,  
They missed his point.  
But he is close by,  
He's hidden  
So close  
By.

I say, go for his spirit, it's only a breath away.  
He never left us, how could he?  
He lives inside us even now.  
You only have to believe  
He is the same as you,  
And always will be.  
Just as you are the  
Same as his spirit.  
For ever and ever,  
You are him.  
He is you  
And that  
Makes  
One



Steve's Reply,

You seem to think that you understand what Christians believe, but it's just all that baggage from your own childhood that you are arguing against. I want to first try to undo the damage done by your erroneous ideas of Christianity.

First, you refer to "the Bible's image of God." The Bible is filled with allegories, and stories showing God's nature, but the second commandment, forbids us from creating any graven images of God.

We are told that God is light; that in him is no darkness at all, not even a shadow of turning. We are also told by revelation that Jesus is the image of the **invisible God**; and we are told that God is LOVE.

As for what LOVE is, 1 Corinthians 13, says LOVE is patient and kind, LOVE does not envy, doesn't brag, and is not arrogant; LOVE does not behave unseemly, does not seek its own way, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, endures all things.

The terms "Creator" and "creature," have nothing to do with size; but refers to the **source**, and the **manifestation**. The creature is this animated, created reality we all find ourselves in, and made out of; which according to physics, is a manifestation made out of pure light; which is the very first thing God created.

The Creator, on the other hand, is self-existing, and is not made out of anything.

By far though, the most damaging idea about what you believe a Christian is, clearly shows a complete lack understanding of the "good news", also known as the gospel of Jesus Christ. You speak of goals and accomplishments that Christians are expected to achieve; yet I am persuaded by God, that **everything** that needs to be accomplished for my salvation, has already been done by Jesus. I enter into a **finished** work. I am **complete** in Christ. I begin, not with a doing, but with a **done**. This is the good news: that God has **already** done the work for us. All we do is **believe**.

You say, "There can be only one Ultimate Source, so the question is how best to come in contact with that."

My understanding is that the Ultimate Source, created the Ultimate Plan, involving the Ultimate Sacrifice. Now He stands at the door of our heart and knocks, and if we hear His voice, and open the door, He will come in and fellowship with us. This has been my experience.



If there is anyone who still believes that light and darkness, are equal, but opposite, you should consider the fact that all the darkness in the Universe, cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.



Darkness is no match against Light; and hate is no match against LOVE; and death is no match against LIFE. The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has made us free from the law of sin and death. We who believe, have already passed from death into LIFE.

what is?----- Love.

How do I know? Because I AM.



## Postscript

Ron, Steve, and Frank are three brothers -- three brothers who grew up in the same home, with the same adversities, with the same freedoms. They each developed an interest in science. Each boy chose a different spiritual path. Perhaps Frank's early diagnosis of schizophrenia, or break from reality, was the result of a spiritual enlightenment, leaving him with a perpetual alternate view of reality. Visits with Frank are very brief, I think because he is so in the Now moment.

Ron and Steve have carried on a lifelong discussion, or argument, about the nature of reality, metaphysics, science, and the path to God. Interestingly, in recent years, they scheduled a weekly phone call for 11 a.m. on Sunday morning, a time when many others are attending a Sunday church service. I think this weekly discussion, while adversarial at times, serves to expand the ideas and spiritual practice of each brother.

And here, they have written about their thoughts on the absolute question "What Is?"

Ron and Steve have different sources of scripture and wisdom. They have different practices. Their basic followings are separated by East versus West. And yet, more than disparity, I am awed by the agreement in their thoughts. Ron and Steve have far more congruence than disagreement.

On the question of "What Is?"

Ron and Steve agree...

Love

Happiness

Choice

Ego

Present Moment

Connection to Nature

Oneness

Wholeness

Higher self

Source

God as Love

Their work was designed to illustrate the opposing viewpoints of two thoughtful, insightful brothers. And at the core, it demonstrates that We are essentially One.

With Love. And so it is.

by Anise Flowers

*Ron's daughter*



## Appendix A

Regards the 4 photos of beings I consider enlightened on page 39, they are as follows going from top left to bottom right:

Shri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) A Hindu mystic of India. The main translation of his teachings is *The Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna* by Swami Nikkilananda

Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) A Hindu mystic of India. Many translations are available including: *Who am I?* by Ramana Maharshi; *The teachings of Ramana Maharshi* by Arthur Osborne; and *Be as You Are* by David Godman.

Alan Watts (1915-1973) A large number of books are available by him. In addition, a large number of post humorous publications of transcripts taken from his many lectures and seminars are available; many of which are also available online as audio CD's. Some of my favorite books are: *Cloud-hidden, Whereabouts Unknown; The book- On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are; The Way of Zen; The Wisdom of Insecurity; This is it; The Tao of Philosophy;* and *Buddhism: The Religion of No-Religion.*

Ram Dass (1931-Present) He was born Richard Alpert and was an associate of Timothy Leary at Harvard University where they worked with psychedelics in the 60's. He also has many seminars and lectures on CD's available through the internet. My favorite books are: *Grist for the Mill* (with Steven Levine); *The only Dance There Is; Remember Be Here Now;* and *Journey of Awakening: a Mediator's Guidebook.*

A potpourri of older classics by other authors that I still love to reread at times are:

Steven Levine, *A Gradual Awakening.* (The best book on meditation that I know of.)

Witter Bynner, translator, *The Way of Life According to Lao Tzu.* (there are hundreds of translations for Lao Tzu's little book on Tao, but this has always remained my favorite.)

Dennis Genpo Merzel, *The Eye Never Sleeps: Striking into the Heart of Zen.*

Ken Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness;* and *No Boundary.*

Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now;* and *A New Earth.*

Sujata, *Beginning to See.* (A nice beginning introduction to meditation.)

J. Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known.* (But he has many other nice books available.)

Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Trans. *The song of God: The Bhagava Gita*

Thich Nat Hanh, *Being Peace,* and *The Miracle of Mindfulness – a Manual on Meditation.*

Shunryu, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind.*

Joseph Goldstein, *The Experience of Insight.*

Wei Wu Wei, *All Else is Bondage: Non-Volitional Living,* and *Posthumous Pieces.*

Abbot Zenkei Shibayanma, *A Flower Does not Talk: Zen Essays*

Benjamin Hoff, *The Tao of Pooh.* (A fun learning for both kids and adults.)

Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy.*

Richard B Clarke, translator, *Hsin-Hsin Ming by Seng-Ts'as, the third Zen Patriarch.*

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, now known as Osho, has over a hundred books which are all good.

Thomas Merton has many in print and they are all filled with wisdom from the East.

Ron Flowers

## Appendix B

Some spiritual models I like because they are simple and easy to remember

- Native: The Warrior who impeccably binds with the fearsome and magical rhythms of heaven and earth, making friends with all of nature.
- Christian: The Child who lovingly pleases his father's wishes and surrenders to his loving care so as to have an eternal place with him.
- Rationalist: The Loner who survives for a few years in an alien and mechanical universe by using knowledge, cunning, and the force of will.
- Hindu: The Actor who uses the whole world as a stage and dances playfully in the changing roles which go on forever.
- Buddhist: The Surfer who endlessly rides the crest of waves by navigating the middle way, free from the drag of attachments.
- Taoist: The Sailor who skillfully tacks into the wind and uses the energy of opposites to effortlessly go in any direction in a timeless journey.
- New Thought: The Dreamer who touches the source and discovers an endless fulfillment of desires thru the power of thought.

I should point out that for me; the Warrior also includes the Shaman who explores the inner world of Spirits.

It is interesting to note that the Buddha was actually a Hindu who, after an awakening experience, made a small, but lasting correction to the Hindu view.

Buddhist students are often told that 3 qualities are required for success on this path: Great Courage, Great Curiosity, and Great Faith. I like to think that a warrior is most known for his great courage, a rational scientist for his curiosity, and a Christian for his great faith.

Note: When the masculine power of Buddhism entered China it was zeroed out by the mother of all Nature religions, Taoism, and out of the pure energy of that blinding Void came Zen, of which nothing can be said.

Ron Flowers

## Appendix C

Personal note:

We are all encouraged to search out that which we believe, until convinced of its validity, or its error. We are never required to accept any view, just because someone else says its true; we each must decide for ourselves.

How we decide what to believe is a huge issue. True faith, is not blind, nor does it happen in a vacuum. Having faith, is being fully persuaded about something. Being convinced to the core. Knowing something, based on persuasion.

Believing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, comes from being persuaded by its truth. This is the way the Father has chosen to call His children to Himself. It's actually rather simple: Those who hear the story and believe, come to Him. Many are called, but only those who hear his voice, come when they're called.

May you all hear his voice.

Recommended reading: Study the Bible and,

C.S. Lewis:

any thing the man has written, is well worth reading. For the mere fun of reading:  
The Chronicles of Narnia.

for the more serious minded:

Mere Christianity

combining the fun of reading, and yet getting as serious as one can get:

Screw Tape Letters

Sit, Walk, and Stand

by Watchman Nee

Love not the world

by Watchman Nee

Like a Mighty Wind

by Mel Tori

Blessed Child

by Ted Dekker

Steven Flowers



## Appendix D (Image credits)

page 1) No picture

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page 11) [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf0120/nsf0120\\_man.html](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf0120/nsf0120_man.html)

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page 18) Tidal Power, unknown origin

## Images

page 19) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://brightdays.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/double-rainbow.jpg&imgrefurl=http://brightdays.wordpress.com/2008/12/20/how-to-fill-your-life-with-peace-and-joy/&usg=\\_\\_NaEK4J6E4wWDmeMnsA16tv-vT3k=&h=375&w=500&sz=124&hl=en&start=28&sig2=OM97yMqR-pXS1ZueG1tnSg&itbs=1&tbnid=N\\_qs48Tc\\_g2gyM:&tbnh=98&tbnw=130&prev=/images%3Fq%3Ddouble%2Bbrainbow%26start%3D18%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=JnChS6GAMpnKswOAraHJAw](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://brightdays.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/double-rainbow.jpg&imgrefurl=http://brightdays.wordpress.com/2008/12/20/how-to-fill-your-life-with-peace-and-joy/&usg=__NaEK4J6E4wWDmeMnsA16tv-vT3k=&h=375&w=500&sz=124&hl=en&start=28&sig2=OM97yMqR-pXS1ZueG1tnSg&itbs=1&tbnid=N_qs48Tc_g2gyM:&tbnh=98&tbnw=130&prev=/images%3Fq%3Ddouble%2Bbrainbow%26start%3D18%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=JnChS6GAMpnKswOAraHJAw)

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page 24) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://uniquetraveldestinations.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/amazing-sunsets-every1\\_www-blogs-ublabs-org1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://uniquetraveldestinations.wordpress.com/2009/06/13/the-worlds-most-unforgettable-sunsets/&usg=\\_\\_li1qyVRwASIC3Rus3M9jTHS2n6w=&h=412&w=550&sz=26&hl=en&start=29&sig2=Aan-KGEFQYtDpDg-PlszyQ&itbs=1&tbnid=VG-wtoHKcFcURM:&tbnh=100&tbnw=133&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dsun%2Bsets%26start%3D18%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=IHKhS4v0JYHStQPsilzJAw](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://uniquetraveldestinations.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/amazing-sunsets-every1_www-blogs-ublabs-org1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://uniquetraveldestinations.wordpress.com/2009/06/13/the-worlds-most-unforgettable-sunsets/&usg=__li1qyVRwASIC3Rus3M9jTHS2n6w=&h=412&w=550&sz=26&hl=en&start=29&sig2=Aan-KGEFQYtDpDg-PlszyQ&itbs=1&tbnid=VG-wtoHKcFcURM:&tbnh=100&tbnw=133&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dsun%2Bsets%26start%3D18%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=IHKhS4v0JYHStQPsilzJAw)

page 26) <http://hornbillunleashed.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/rose1.jpg>

page 27) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.jackhaas.net/art-modern-abstract-digital-art-fractal-15-dynamic-quaternity-cosmic-redemption-web.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.jackhaas.net/&usg=\\_\\_N\\_CLiLBJwqdEGwU-3pxPpiCVwis=&h=525&w=700&sz=105&hl=en&start=18&sig2=0TSL57Ym76JMN0tpGC2-yg&itbs=1&tbnid=ijVkg0e2llc8HM:&tbnh=105&tbnw=140&prev=/images%3Fq%3Ddigital%2Bart%2Bfractals%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=K4-S5Hkloe4tgOH9OHWAw](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.jackhaas.net/art-modern-abstract-digital-art-fractal-15-dynamic-quaternity-cosmic-redemption-web.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.jackhaas.net/&usg=__N_CLiLBJwqdEGwU-3pxPpiCVwis=&h=525&w=700&sz=105&hl=en&start=18&sig2=0TSL57Ym76JMN0tpGC2-yg&itbs=1&tbnid=ijVkg0e2llc8HM:&tbnh=105&tbnw=140&prev=/images%3Fq%3Ddigital%2Bart%2Bfractals%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=K4-S5Hkloe4tgOH9OHWAw)

page 28) <http://beowulf99.com/Galleries/Vegas/images/LionFish.jpg>

page 29) unknown origin

## Images

page 30) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.background-wallpapers.com/d/11314/-/light-effects\\_1600\\_x\\_1200.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.background-wallpapers.com/art-design-wallpapers/photography/light-effects.html&usg=\\_\\_liZ5UymD1dnSWJw1K6lfSpQ64KU=&h=1200&w=1600&sz=302&hl=en&start=135&sig2=guhUcUJOCnwmFKZwEoXcLA&itbs=1&tbnid=s-y7uYn41pNWPM:&tbnh=113&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dlight%26start%3D126%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=0G2hS-CcJI-QswPzmtjaAw](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.background-wallpapers.com/d/11314/-/light-effects_1600_x_1200.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.background-wallpapers.com/art-design-wallpapers/photography/light-effects.html&usg=__liZ5UymD1dnSWJw1K6lfSpQ64KU=&h=1200&w=1600&sz=302&hl=en&start=135&sig2=guhUcUJOCnwmFKZwEoXcLA&itbs=1&tbnid=s-y7uYn41pNWPM:&tbnh=113&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dlight%26start%3D126%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=0G2hS-CcJI-QswPzmtjaAw)

page 31) unknown origin

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page 34) <http://www.spacetelescope.org/images/html/opo0432d.html>

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page 37) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://news.bbc.co.uk/media/images/45521000/jpg/\\_45521597\\_wave\\_sunset3.jpg&imgrefurl=http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid\\_7910000/newsid\\_7916500/7916550.stm&usg=\\_\\_KwrRA4NCWx7GedBpPWZxkqwTX1A=&h=300&w=416&sz=50&hl=en&start=3&itbs=1&tbnid=6oc3lUJ6t9spsM:&tbnh=90&tbnw=125&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dwave%2Bsunset%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://news.bbc.co.uk/media/images/45521000/jpg/_45521597_wave_sunset3.jpg&imgrefurl=http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_7910000/newsid_7916500/7916550.stm&usg=__KwrRA4NCWx7GedBpPWZxkqwTX1A=&h=300&w=416&sz=50&hl=en&start=3&itbs=1&tbnid=6oc3lUJ6t9spsM:&tbnh=90&tbnw=125&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dwave%2Bsunset%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1)



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page 39) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.vedantastl.org/Ramakrishna\\_Disiples/SRKPaintingLr8.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.vedantastl.org/Ramakrishna\\_Disiples/RKandDisiples.htm&usq= IzHtBjn72IYmTfom3V913wL55gl=&h=576&w=459&sz=55&hl=en&start=6&sig2=GWRG7KSYsVdjSp0crEQ1ow&itbs=1&tbnid=ud2qgGmW-a6CZM:&tbnh=134&tbnw=107&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dshri%2Bramakrishna%26hl%3Den%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=kl-IS8XTF6XYswOWrdG9BA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.vedantastl.org/Ramakrishna_Disiples/SRKPaintingLr8.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.vedantastl.org/Ramakrishna_Disiples/RKandDisiples.htm&usq= IzHtBjn72IYmTfom3V913wL55gl=&h=576&w=459&sz=55&hl=en&start=6&sig2=GWRG7KSYsVdjSp0crEQ1ow&itbs=1&tbnid=ud2qgGmW-a6CZM:&tbnh=134&tbnw=107&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dshri%2Bramakrishna%26hl%3Den%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=kl-IS8XTF6XYswOWrdG9BA)

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page 48) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://morealtitude.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/winter-sunset.jpg&imgrefurl=http://morealtitude.wordpress.com/2009/05/&usg=\\_\\_dtqmxJam7bgGLpd8y3RNRADUa5c=&h=535&w=800&sz=80&hl=en&start=206&sig2=-XIT4Hv5Az5na\\_4-ZvpZFA&itbs=1&tbnid=r8fqscFrTenl9M:&tbnh=96&tbnw=143&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dwinter%2Bsunset%26start%3D198%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=tJ6IS9uGNaxAtAOj\\_JS9BA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://morealtitude.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/winter-sunset.jpg&imgrefurl=http://morealtitude.wordpress.com/2009/05/&usg=__dtqmxJam7bgGLpd8y3RNRADUa5c=&h=535&w=800&sz=80&hl=en&start=206&sig2=-XIT4Hv5Az5na_4-ZvpZFA&itbs=1&tbnid=r8fqscFrTenl9M:&tbnh=96&tbnw=143&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dwinter%2Bsunset%26start%3D198%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=tJ6IS9uGNaxAtAOj_JS9BA)

page 49) Humming bird, unknown origin

page 51) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://graphics2.snopes.com/photos/natural/graphics/storm9.jpg&imgrefurl=http://digg.com/general\\_sciences/Ominous\\_Cloud\\_Hovers\\_Over\\_Tropical\\_Island&usg=\\_\\_OdRP\\_nJC7PA6seHrLibX7\\_f6SDc=&h=600&w=800&sz=37&hl=en&start=332&sig2=wk\\_WMk4RfiQCo4uQ34FYlg&itbs=1&tbnid=f7dG6vpjzngMRM:&tbnh=107&tbnw=143&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dstorm%2Bclouds%2Bover%2Bisland%26start%3D324%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=Bbu6S6GSOqbmtAPm682vBA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://graphics2.snopes.com/photos/natural/graphics/storm9.jpg&imgrefurl=http://digg.com/general_sciences/Ominous_Cloud_Hovers_Over_Tropical_Island&usg=__OdRP_nJC7PA6seHrLibX7_f6SDc=&h=600&w=800&sz=37&hl=en&start=332&sig2=wk_WMk4RfiQCo4uQ34FYlg&itbs=1&tbnid=f7dG6vpjzngMRM:&tbnh=107&tbnw=143&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dstorm%2Bclouds%2Bover%2Bisland%26start%3D324%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=Bbu6S6GSOqbmtAPm682vBA)

page 52) Water drop, unknown origin.

page 56) unknown origin

page 58) <http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://tpnevents.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/621compassion15-se-kids1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://tpnevents.com/blog/tag/dalai-lama&usq= 4zW k mg-yaRDyEfW0dt70iy2w=&h=373&w=621&sz=60&hl=en&start=392&sig2=7 t95t7AcvnoWQqk-TmMzg&itbs=1&tbnid=tSXgeQDAyBichM:&tbnh=82&tbnw=136&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dcompassion%2Bpictures%26start%3D378%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=Hou7S zOFovGswOMr8GwBA>

page 59) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.bestroyaltyfreeimages.net/best-royalty-free-images-love-pink-flamingos-Kjunstorm.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.bestroyaltyfreeimages.net/royalty-free-images-animal-flamingo-love.htm&usq= LcHYDjwsmCcFBDUtUC\\_j-zW6B8w=&h=810&w=1024&sz=579&hl=en&start=8&sig2=Jf9JsFSPxpISkKcxW9ISsg&itbs=1&tbnid=2sXFk3Q0mlezM:&tbnh=119&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dflamingos%2Bpictures%26hl%3Den%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=zou7S-CgEJ7mtQOH8bDEBA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.bestroyaltyfreeimages.net/best-royalty-free-images-love-pink-flamingos-Kjunstorm.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.bestroyaltyfreeimages.net/royalty-free-images-animal-flamingo-love.htm&usq= LcHYDjwsmCcFBDUtUC_j-zW6B8w=&h=810&w=1024&sz=579&hl=en&start=8&sig2=Jf9JsFSPxpISkKcxW9ISsg&itbs=1&tbnid=2sXFk3Q0mlezM:&tbnh=119&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dflamingos%2Bpictures%26hl%3Den%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=zou7S-CgEJ7mtQOH8bDEBA)

page 60) unknown origin

page 61) <http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://photoblog.statesman.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/prayer2.jpg&imgrefurl=http://photoblog.statesman.com/a-day-of-prayer-at-fort-hood&usq= IdGcANVU6EsZ9Zs0BgUjxR-XPXQ=&h=1733&w=2398&sz=864&hl=en&start=824&sig2=-gaG09Ub7 bkG-7AsaZbZw&itbs=1&tbnid=UvF10rYViC8YGM:&tbnh=108&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dprayer%26start%3D810%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=Q4-7S-f0CqKitgPyzJl->

page 62) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://rampant-mac.com/dp\\_07/Big-Bang-Theory\\_alt2\\_1920.jpg&imgrefurl=http://rampant-mac.com/wp/%3Fp%3D192&usq= IKlfOaCAF1KXvGulLdf BsjuFmg=&h=1200&w=1920&sz=908&hl=en&start=80&sig2=kp35AEKB2eACmqIH0yczeA&itbs=1&tbnid=NbqWUjLSNCWkHM:&tbnh=94&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dbig%2Bbang%26start%3D72%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=X5K7S-LJFKbmtAPm682vBA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://rampant-mac.com/dp_07/Big-Bang-Theory_alt2_1920.jpg&imgrefurl=http://rampant-mac.com/wp/%3Fp%3D192&usq= IKlfOaCAF1KXvGulLdf BsjuFmg=&h=1200&w=1920&sz=908&hl=en&start=80&sig2=kp35AEKB2eACmqIH0yczeA&itbs=1&tbnid=NbqWUjLSNCWkHM:&tbnh=94&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dbig%2Bbang%26start%3D72%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=X5K7S-LJFKbmtAPm682vBA)



page 63) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://nature.wallpaperme.com/4649-2/Countryside%2BSplendor\\_%2BFrance.jpg&imgrefurl=http://nature.wallpaperme.com/popular%3Fq2\\_itemId%3D4647&usg=\\_\\_cxn\\_bEUD8\\_liBF-NSExQVBZVCLY=&h=480&w=640&sz=132&hl=en&start=1&sig2=1\\_0zqheMablKHoArJNHR1Q&itbs=1&tbnid=pmrB8g9QEit74M:&tbnh=103&tbnw=137&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dcountryside%2B\(France\)%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=y5O7S7LmA6DgtQPqv7i1BA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://nature.wallpaperme.com/4649-2/Countryside%2BSplendor_%2BFrance.jpg&imgrefurl=http://nature.wallpaperme.com/popular%3Fq2_itemId%3D4647&usg=__cxn_bEUD8_liBF-NSExQVBZVCLY=&h=480&w=640&sz=132&hl=en&start=1&sig2=1_0zqheMablKHoArJNHR1Q&itbs=1&tbnid=pmrB8g9QEit74M:&tbnh=103&tbnw=137&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dcountryside%2B(France)%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=y5O7S7LmA6DgtQPqv7i1BA)

page 64) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.lachurch.net/prayer.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.lachurch.net/prayer/index.php&usg=\\_\\_0C91PQ3X2ADdSsLnCklZsp60fEk=&h=768&w=1024&sz=239&hl=en&start=100&sig2=7zFpWCz-pD4llxKnCUGA&itbs=1&tbnid=YwA36TROX3I-1M:&tbnh=113&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dprayer%26start%3D90%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=25S7S-fJ5SUtQPcn93FBA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.lachurch.net/prayer.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.lachurch.net/prayer/index.php&usg=__0C91PQ3X2ADdSsLnCklZsp60fEk=&h=768&w=1024&sz=239&hl=en&start=100&sig2=7zFpWCz-pD4llxKnCUGA&itbs=1&tbnid=YwA36TROX3I-1M:&tbnh=113&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dprayer%26start%3D90%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=25S7S-fJ5SUtQPcn93FBA)

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page 66) unknown origin

page 67) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://7art-screensavers.com/flowers/2004-08-19-flowers-photos/like-the-sun-flowers.jpg&imgrefurl=http://7art-screensavers.com/flowersfree.shtml&usg=\\_\\_w7bTnRNngPOHq3aJkExajYNx2XfM=&h=768&w=1024&sz=113&hl=en&start=137&sig2=eoi3ftJa2kVeqe3sM42nwA&itbs=1&tbnid=CyP-OyQj3hIOKM:&tbnh=113&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dflowers%26start%3D126%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=Upq7S\\_2sEJyMtgPvxPCwBA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://7art-screensavers.com/flowers/2004-08-19-flowers-photos/like-the-sun-flowers.jpg&imgrefurl=http://7art-screensavers.com/flowersfree.shtml&usg=__w7bTnRNngPOHq3aJkExajYNx2XfM=&h=768&w=1024&sz=113&hl=en&start=137&sig2=eoi3ftJa2kVeqe3sM42nwA&itbs=1&tbnid=CyP-OyQj3hIOKM:&tbnh=113&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dflowers%26start%3D126%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=Upq7S_2sEJyMtgPvxPCwBA)

page 68) unknown origin

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page 72) unknown origin

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page 74) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.lifedynamix.com/articles/files/iStockMeditationB.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.lifedynamix.com/articles/Mental-Health/Chakra\\_Meditation.html&usg=\\_\\_baN-JzP7XfRhZPqHnmHddPcMh3Q=&h=300&w=475&sz=125&hl=en&start=5&sig2=B0UU9ZeAKB988k2BdyC9hQ&itbs=1&tbnid=aPzLo3P4qvJ7VM:&tbnh=81&tbnw=129&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dmeditation%2Bimages%26hl%3Den%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=OuC7S5CHL5yMtgPvxPCwBA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.lifedynamix.com/articles/files/iStockMeditationB.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.lifedynamix.com/articles/Mental-Health/Chakra_Meditation.html&usg=__baN-JzP7XfRhZPqHnmHddPcMh3Q=&h=300&w=475&sz=125&hl=en&start=5&sig2=B0UU9ZeAKB988k2BdyC9hQ&itbs=1&tbnid=aPzLo3P4qvJ7VM:&tbnh=81&tbnw=129&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dmeditation%2Bimages%26hl%3Den%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=OuC7S5CHL5yMtgPvxPCwBA)

page 75) unknown origin

page 76) unknown origin

page 77) ) Stock.XCHNG [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu) photo ID857805

page 78) dragon fly, unknown origin

page 80) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://cnreviews.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/sichuan-earthquake-candle-light-vigil-05.jpg&imgrefurl=http://cnreviews.com/life/events/in-memory-1-year-anniversary-512-sichuan-earthquake\\_20090511.html&usg=\\_\\_0GeXthL3cShmJ6gBwPBxZ5XDLAk=&h=367&w=350&sz=21&hl=en&start=9&sig2=iiJiSAIMa98PYu7NI3tcQw&itbs=1&tbnid=kHAH7vBODaxrfM:&tbnh=122&tbnw=116&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dcandle%2Blight%2Bvigil%26tbnid%3DPiYKcEzpUkkr9M:%26tbnh%3D0%26tbnw%3D0%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=vei7S9T8BKj6tAPq8OGzBA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://cnreviews.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/sichuan-earthquake-candle-light-vigil-05.jpg&imgrefurl=http://cnreviews.com/life/events/in-memory-1-year-anniversary-512-sichuan-earthquake_20090511.html&usg=__0GeXthL3cShmJ6gBwPBxZ5XDLAk=&h=367&w=350&sz=21&hl=en&start=9&sig2=iiJiSAIMa98PYu7NI3tcQw&itbs=1&tbnid=kHAH7vBODaxrfM:&tbnh=122&tbnw=116&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dcandle%2Blight%2Bvigil%26tbnid%3DPiYKcEzpUkkr9M:%26tbnh%3D0%26tbnw%3D0%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=vei7S9T8BKj6tAPq8OGzBA)

## Final Image

page 81) [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.freefoto.com/images/05/08/05\\_08\\_5---Cross-on-a-Hill\\_web.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.freefoto.com/preview/05-08-5%3Ffid%3D05-08-5&usg=\\_\\_log5LRqskPt0wU\\_-QGEH5tKCJbM=&h=400&w=600&sz=146&hl=en&start=1&sig2=4hc9Nrtzi3jxL1IKO7Jpng&itbs=1&tbnid=PiYKcEzpUkkr9M:&tbnh=90&tbnw=135&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dcross%26tbnid%3DPiYKcEzpUkkr9M:%26tbnh%3D0%26tbnw%3D0%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26imgtype%3Di\\_similar%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=weS7S9iwMpD4tAPz6OG-BA](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.freefoto.com/images/05/08/05_08_5---Cross-on-a-Hill_web.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.freefoto.com/preview/05-08-5%3Ffid%3D05-08-5&usg=__log5LRqskPt0wU_-QGEH5tKCJbM=&h=400&w=600&sz=146&hl=en&start=1&sig2=4hc9Nrtzi3jxL1IKO7Jpng&itbs=1&tbnid=PiYKcEzpUkkr9M:&tbnh=90&tbnw=135&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dcross%26tbnid%3DPiYKcEzpUkkr9M:%26tbnh%3D0%26tbnw%3D0%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26gbv%3D2%26imgtype%3Di_similar%26ndsp%3D18%26tbs%3Disch:1&ei=weS7S9iwMpD4tAPz6OG-BA)

All family pictures provided courtesy of the Flowers family.