



the Ray of Connection

A SOCIETY OF SOULS® NEWSLETTER

Who Is God?

Jason replies to Lama Surya Das:
Transcribed from Enlightenment Online

This writer says, "Who or what is God, as far as you can see or say? Where is He, She or It? Why do so many tragic and even evil-seeming things happen in the world? And finally, who are you, really?"

I imagine the questioner's not asking about me, particularly, personally, but all of us, "Who are we?"

I'd like to talk about this question in a very personal way, to give you my personal feelings about it and how I've dealt with these questions along my spiritual path. The first thing I would want to say is I don't know the answer to any of these questions. I realized long ago that at least for me, on my path, that factually based answers were not so important.

What was important was how I was going to relate to life, how I was going to relate to these things, how I was going to relate to God, to evil, to suffering, and so on. That was going to be important.

So from my original position of what I had which was, these things were very separate- God, suffering and evil- they were separate from me- in that evil and suffering for instance were things that happened to me, as if there was a me, and suffering happened to me, and evil happened to me, or I committed evil or I engendered suffering on somebody else, and God was separate as well.

Instead of that position, which was my original position, I began to understand that these things were a part of me. I was made of suffering, I was made of God. I was made of evil.

That changed everything, really. All of these things were now things that I could be in relationship to. So the how of relationship, how I was going to relate to them, became much more important than the factually based why or what, we could say. That's what my path became.

We might say that my "Who is" changed from one that was interested in these factual answers to one who got exhausted searching for them and was replaced by a different perspective.

By seeing myself as (containing) being made of those things, I began to see myself as a part of the Universe and not a stranger to the Universe. There was no longer a me on one side and these things that happened. They were all one continuum.

Relating to God and evil and suffering as building blocks of myself also allowed me to have a greater relationship with all other beings, whether they were human, animal, plant, tree, rock, or mineral. It broke down the barriers between my life and the life around me.

It also allowed me, and I think this is something that's becoming increasingly important to me, to have a better, and I think healthier relationship with the unknown and the unknowable. So instead of the unknown and the unknowable being enemies that separated me from life, they became allies. So rather than stopping me from living, they have enhanced my living, because to be in relationship with the unknown and the unknowable is to be in relationship with life. So I hope this gives you something to think about.

Please visit Enlightenment Online

www.en-on.org

With Deep Gratitude

So much of the work we engage with at ASOS is based on relationship. A few months ago, I realized my desire to share the editing and creation of this newsletter with Erin Minta. She has been a fantastic, wise and constant support. Thank you Erin, I look forward to growing the Ray with you.

And to the ASOS community, please continue to send your creative musings to me. Please make the articles under 900 words. Send to me at: eileenmm@optonline.net.

With gratitude and love,
Eileen Marder-Mirman, editor



WORSHIP AND ADORATION

Beth Almerini, IKH 2009

Long before I began my IKH experience four years ago, I tried my hand at photography. While there were a few photographs that conveyed something of what I wanted to capture, mostly it was an exercise in waiting and frustration - waiting for film to be developed only to see the many errors in composition or technique which couldn't be fixed. Lacking the patience for this level of aggravation, I gave it up.

When I began the IKH class, the very last thing I ever thought would happen would be to find myself back where I started, yet in an entirely different place. At the end of my first year, I picked up a camera again and everything had changed.

I came to understand that photography is a way of being present, of noticing, and of allowing whatever is present to be itself - nothing more or less. My goal now is not to necessarily get the 'perfect' shot, it is to get the right one; the photograph that lets the subject, flowers, shells, the ocean, shore birds or grain of sand, be exactly what it is.

Doing that takes time, and a lot of it. I find myself on long walks, allowing myself to be open to whatever shows up - a *la* form anxiety (a meditation I used to avoid whenever possible!) When something does show up, I stay there and let myself be drawn in. Then I take out my camera, and photography becomes less an exercise in technique and perfection, and more an act of worship and adoration.

Visit Beth's web site: www.lunafiorephotography.com





Cooking in Reality

Gail Cohan, IKH 2007

We just finished the dinner I prepared and when my partner, Nancy, said, "Wow, that was delicious!" I said, "Thank Jason."

Actually, this is not the first time I've declared that appreciation for my cooking should really go to Jason.

Let me explain.

I love to cook. I have loved to cook for as long as I can remember. I cook a lot. I read cookbooks. I search for recipes. I can curl up with a cookbook and love examining the recipes, thinking about the novel combinations of foods, the spices added to them, appreciating them even if I never prepare them. What I did cook, I prepared from my well-studied recipes. It was delicious. It was healthy. It was economical. It was a means of nurturing my partner and myself. (News flash, in real time: Nancy just took a bite of the cooked, spices apples I whipped up for dessert. Nancy: "Mmmmm. This is delicious." Me: "Thank Jason.") But there was one glitch - I could only cook from recipes. I was brilliant as long as I found a recipe, gathered my ingredients and followed the directions.

In spite of my enthusiasm. I was only as good a cook as my recipes allowed me to be.

When I would try to make something by combining foods I already had in the kitchen, it would invariably be a failure. I can remember the feeling. As I was combining ingredients creatively, I would recognize a tiny internal warning: "DON'T DO IT! DON'T PUT THOSE FOODS TOGETHER! IT'S TOO WEIRD!" But I easily ignored it. My cooking trance was powerfully shielding me from reality. I would continue, determined to create the meal I was in a fantasy with. Needless to say, the results were often weird and generally not very delicious.

Then, I studied IKH, the Work of Return, MAGI, IM1, and IM2. I was led into the Tree of Life by Jason. I had wonderful teachers, wonderful healers. I journeyed with my amazing classmates. I started to get it, about reality.

At one point, in a workshop at an ASM, I made a little sign for myself. It says, "Be wherever you are. Just know it." It was such a struggle for me. Know where I am? Isn't where I am just where I should be, or where someone else thinks I should be? At this moment, I see it. It has nothing to do with should or with anyone else. It's about reality. I am, most of the time these days, in reality. It's not always good. Sometimes it's fabulous. Sometimes it's terribly painful. Sometimes it's pretty neutral. But, it's reality. It has all kinds of flavors, all sorts of ingredients, both familiar and exotic.

Which brings me back to cooking: Being more in reality, I can now cook without recipes! Tonight when it was suggested that I put the tiny sausage from a gift basket in the sautéed broccoli rabe, I immediately knew it was wrong: "Oh no, those flavors are too intense to put together." Instead, I made a gentle sauce of artichoke hearts in broth, added the small bits of sausage, put it over pasta and voilà.

"Thanks, Jason."

The Woman in the Moon

Kerry Arnold, IKH 2009

Beams of the
full moon
stream
through the
window panes
like searchlights
from the heavens
leaving perfect
squares
of illumination
on the floor

It is 2:35 am
and I am making
my way to the
bathroom
and am pulled
by this divine
light show
and I crouch
my entire body
into a glowing
panel on the
granite tile

My ego
urges me
to stop
engaging in this
luna-cy
and complete
the mission
I arose to do

It is in this
moment
the words
of my teacher's
passage literally
come to light:
"...the ego
doesn't see itself
as the beauty it
truly is.

Oh Reader !
Let yourself
heal into
Yourself ! "

I smile
curled into
my ball of
basking in
the light
and I say aloud
to my ego
"Awwwww,
I see you wanting
to protect me
from being
perceived as
nutty or a witch
and it's hard
when I stray
from routine
and your
need for
control."

And I pull
my ego-self
into my
God-self
and we
let the sweet
beams wash
and cleanse
us.

How tender
it is to be
here
nesting
chaos/order
and
surrender/fight
all the while
bathing my ego
in moonlight ...



THE DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS

Jackie Tatelman, IKH 1997

The Diagnostic Process is a practice for me. Within the IKH Healings and in particular the Diagnostic Process, there are principles that have shifted my world view and those of my clients. Principles including kindness, open listening, following the gravity of what is occurring, seeing fragments of fractured wholeness and being curious. The Tree of Life is always revealing in moments of concealment as well as illumination.

Allowing of all parts of myself to exist is primary to being able to ride the “wave of transference”. We know from our training that we don’t see the world as it is, but how we are. We import our past, in subtle and not so subtle ways, to make sense of the world. As we learn to relax and allow those parts of ourselves to become visible, they lose their influence. When the echoes of the poisoned ground (the deepest personal wounds that we suffer from) are allowed to be, and we no longer need to save ourselves, we return to the center of our being. Here the grace and creativity of the Diagnostic Process unfolds.

The position I used to hold stopped a deep connection to the world and created a false sense of safety. The world became divided and there was no real intimacy. It has taken a transformation of myself to allow my inner experience to have a place and therefore be able to be present with failure, doubt and the unknown. As I allow everything to be present, my doubts can co-exist with my mastery.

The Diagnostic Process is a practice of “falling into my own center of being” that is not based upon the urgency of self-improvement. Instead I would say it is based upon the natural gravity of Self with a capital S. This Self, which Jason last year described as the Future Self is always present. Every piece of me is part of this process. Whether I am clear or unclear, defended or undefended, open or closed, in touch with my heart or closed hearted, it is all part of a dance.

The quality of kindness has been a central theme for me these past 10 years. The exploration of kindness through the Diagnostic Process has been central to my healing journey and has led me deeper within myself. Kindness has shown me that I am enough and that there is enough. Through the years, I have learned to not exile any part of myself. I have learned that if I allow myself to simply show up with all of who I am in the moment, I can listen to my clients and invite them to show up as well. This is an on-going process. The Diagnostic Process builds kindness and is a kindness itself.

The embodiment of kindness is reflected in how I am with my clients and myself. I am able to see more deeply, clearly and to be a true healing presence. I was sitting with a client of mine the other day and hearing the limitations she puts on herself for true happiness. She shared how she was afraid of growing old and being all alone. She has done a lot of personal healing and here she is again without hope, without faith and truly convinced this is how it will be. To be with her in a compassionate way requires me to feel my own fears of aging. To be able to stand in the truth of her conviction and let that be, requires of me a deep trust that all experience is valuable. I can’t know how long she may need to be where she is. I find the compassion of shared human experience. I know what it is like to be convinced, to be scared to be apart.

From my experience I can say that there seems to be no end to the unfolding. The complexity and simplicity of the process moves me to understanding with wisdom. It supports the intelligence of my intellect and my heart. It allows my confusion to exist at the same time as my clarity. It allows me to be completely individual and completely not two. It transforms both of us, the healer and the client. Most importantly it demands the best of me, to show up in the moment as I am. As I continue to recognize that showing up is all that is required, I can go even deeper. “World without end. Amen.”



Crossing The River with the Elder

Lili Zohar. IKH 2009

Zen master Sengmi of Shenshan crossed a river with his dharma brother Dongshan. Dongshan said, "Don't make a mistake with your steps and slip into the current." Shenshan said, "If I make a mistake with my steps, then I won't live to cross the river." Dongshan said, "What is the state without mistakes? Shenshan said, "Crossing the river with the elder." (John D Looi, The True Dharma Eye, Shambhala 2005)

By my fourth year in this school, it has become clear to me how focused I am on mistakes. In year one, it felt that if a mistake were made in this most vulnerable of settings, I would not live to cross the river. With heart pounding and hands frozen blue, I vigilantly scanned for danger.

I had this quandary. I knew from the moment I opened Jason's book on non-dual healing, that on a very deep level something most powerful was being reconfigured within me. Reading while on vacation in Mexico, I felt my soul being serenaded across time and space. The ocean and stars were also singing, and I was listening from a place that had long been mummified, yet was yearning to shake free. By book's end, I was completely committed to this work. I understood the value of what was being transmitted. My

body shimmied with this information. It hit me like a tsunami each time I entered the classroom. When the scared and scarred me wanted to run, something greater than my fear held me fast.

So, why do I still hold myself back? Sadly, I am coming to realize how hard it has been to trust the river and myself. I thought I had to be impressive and perfect or the outside safety would explode or disappear. With fear steering the boat, it had been hard to find a strong center from which an inner directed compass could discern my own true north. Without this connection, accomplishment had come without satisfaction.

The all-powerful elder lived outside, needed to see me and was supposed to be perfect to make my world safe. My attention pinned on others, I have feared connecting to my own vision. Too big or too small, I might die. With time, I have come to understand that even unskillful deeds and words can bring tremendous healing. When I tenderly hold my exaggerated reaction with kindness and responsibility, something softens and unwinds. My own container and the one being held for this Society reach farther and wider than I had understood.

Dropping baggage, I let fall away the activities undertaken to impress others, to legitimize my life. This leaves me time alone, near the snow-covered mountains and bountiful rivers full from Spring's invigorating runoff. Today I am playing in the water, soaking in hot spring pools along the river's edge.

Increasingly I trust the now. With the unraveling of my terror, I am finding my quiet passion and the courage to be me. Surely, there will be steps and missteps along the way. When I stumble or lose my way, I am coming to recognize the inner elder, reaching out to take my hand.

From mist to ice, to river,
Life's fearless water changes form without
loss.
Yielding, she carves canyons, never look-
ing back.
Held by earth, sky and ocean,
She shows the Way.

THE OTHER SIDE OF LONGING

Susan Krasner, IKH 2005

Jason says, "The heart of everything is longing for Wholeness." The word "longing" is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as a strong, persistent yearning or desire, especially one that cannot be fulfilled, and is often referred to as having to do with God.

I really did not know much at all about my longing until the 3rd year of ASOS, when we learned about the sefirot of yesod. During that weekend, I had a particularly confounding interaction with Jason in class around the subject of longing. "Your longing is so great that I think at times what you do is disconnect from it." Since then I have been engaged in an inquiry into the subject.

When I was 6 years old and my brother, who was 18 months younger, was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor. My mother had told me to pray for my brother so that he would live, and so I prayed all the time. Life became seemingly one continuous prayer. My dear brother Mark died the day before my 7th birthday. The pain was so intense for me and my family that we would not recover from this loss for many years. My longing for connection was overwhelming as I was left alone for many hours at a time during and after the illness, and losing my brother, my best friend.

As my parents spiraled into addictions and other destructive behaviors my world became more and more confusing. My father's anger built up over the years, and the fear of authority I developed in my childhood was a deep seated lens through how I would see and interact with the world.

My longing and search for truth intensified. I longed to understand my confusing world, and longed to help others with their suffering. I enrolled in graduate school to complete a master's of social work program. On the last day of graduate school, one of my favorite teenage clients killed himself in the middle of a violent argument with his father. I went into personal crisis. I sold all of my possessions, left San Diego and off I went to travel to Asia, to search, meditate, and to find answers. Just several years earlier, my best friend in college had also killed himself. The way I

had thought I could help others and my sense of purpose was profoundly shattered.

One day, while in Asia, I pleaded with God to show me the nature of reality, to help me reconcile the truth of the extreme opposites I was witness to. After I said my prayer, I was drawn down a particular path in the jungle. I followed the path where I met a most generous, kind soul of an old man, who spontaneously shared gifts of fruit and tea with me. Because of the synchronistic timing of my prayers, and the personally moving and joyful encounter with this stranger, I concluded that the essential nature of the world must be love. Several hours later I witnessed that same man, in a drunken stupor, murder an 11 year old boy who had been helping him. I had prayed to know the nature of reality, and my answer was a type of living koan.

After 10 years away, my need to solve the koan led me home to Rochester to understand my own history and suffering. My search had been disappointing, even devastating.

I originally had entered ASOS because I thought it was there I could find enlightenment. Instead I was experiencing profound healing, and it was healing that was expanding my awareness of Reality. Understanding my longing and knowing that it comes from inside of me, created the space so that I no longer hold God responsible for my longing; my longing is God speaking.

Because everything is longing for Wholeness, healing is not "something" we do to another, healing is engaging in the essential nature of all things. For me, this is the "other side" of longing.



ALWAYS CLOSER

Kathy Bernstein, IKH 2004

When I began my ASOS training in 2001, I started sinking deeper into the nature of this deep stream we all enter, but my process sped up when I signed up for the Spiritual Leadership Training.

The training was not just about teaching this material, but embodying it. As the old AA saying puts it, I had to "walk the talk." Hence, some places in me that were asleep were about to be awakened. I am always caught off guard by the depth and breadth of what emerges with this work.

As soon as I began facilitating the Spiritual Leadership Training classes, my stuff showed up like flies on a dead fish.

There was a person in a class I was teaching who challenged almost everything with the premise that the body does not exist, opening the door for another student who jumped in to support her objections. Her challenge stopped me dead in my tracks and I did an end run to the manual, which tangled me up and separated us - me and the class - even more.

I skipped over what was in the room and tried to replace it with the text found in the manual. No wonder she persisted. Even the beautiful manual was no substitute for staying present to myself and another.

My initial response to this person - to separate - opened the door to my suffering, which became the focus of my process. My dreams began rolling in night after night, all so exquisitely pointing to the same place. In all of them I had no place to settle down. One dream said, "Name It." What made it so impossible for me to stay with this person in this class?

I kept the morning of class five free to look over the manual and re-group. I awoke with a dream whose truth nourished me to the marrow.

There are two of me in the dream. Both are in the water. One is walking in the water toward the shore; the other stands still in the water, behind the first as she nears the shore. The me having the dream is the me walking toward the shore. I hear the other me behind me pleading "NO! NO!" in the same frayed voice as my grandchild in the middle of a night terror. The instant I heard this plea I knew that she was saying to me "Stop do not change." I turn to face her and her terror-ridden pleading. At that instant, I see that she is garbed in lotus petals.

I had no idea, that one of my most primitive, defended parts was so received, so held, not separate from God at all.

I spent the morning crying. I didn't really have to review for the class, because I was in it. At the class that night, my personal stuff was there. The difference was, I was more present. I met the ups and the downs, of me, of the class, and the material. There was more of a curiosity and a freedom than terror.

The support of the ASOS staff and the lineage of this work allowed me to meet all the parts of myself that all too often I believe I must exclude or repress in order to be intimate with myself, this work and others. And as my dream revealed so exquisitely, God is always closer than I can imagine.



Future Self

Brenda Blessings, IKH 1998

The Future Self is calling out to you. Your most enlightened realized Self is calling out to you to awaken here and now. These words "calling out to you" seem to come from the linear point of view - there is a Future Self and this Future Self is "calling out to you", who you are now, in the present moment. How about if this "calling out to you" is within the impulses, movements activities of your daily life, everything that it means to be a human being, living a human life? How does it change then?

How about this one? The Future Self is the seed of our spiritual lives and not the fruit of our effort. Cause/effect are much closer together. It is because of our Buddha nature, our enlightened nature, who we already are, that we choose to be in this world, to express who we are in the world of the finite, to know ourselves in the finite, and as finite beings.

The Future Self, who is the seed of our spiritual lives not the fruit of our efforts, is already here and now, in this moment, in this life, in this bound, finite Place - not someplace else - not far away. Why do we not recognize this?

Fundamentally, it begins with resistance. We resist being who we are, where we are now.

If we believe we are a thing only, then we have to protect this thing. We have to protect it from the flow of life, which it isn't in control of, because anything that is deemed *outside* of the control of the small self is potentially dangerous. We're identified with our self as being a particular set of things (of pieces and parts) and everything else is NOT that, so we reject those things. The more we are identified with these things, the more we resist the movement of our lives in the moment. Because really, if we believe from the point of view of being a thing - aren't we most afraid of our thingness ceasing to exist?

And, if we identified only with the Absolute, then we're resisting being who we are - as finite, limited beings, constantly moving and changing, dissolving forms and new forms arising, the dynamic Quality of our own nature. We're wanting and

insisting upon only the stillness, vastness, static Quality and trying to escape/cut off from our own limited nature.

The truth is though, sometimes we are small and separate. When we can say, Here I Am, let me be here, meet this as it is, be as I am, we are free to ask for help from those who appear to be separate from us. We call out and can receive the right nourishment in that moment because we know who we are, where we are. This can be calling out to God, guides, teachers, the Council, friends, healers.

As Jason says, "The holy Separate One always answers. Sometimes we are vast and wide. Our help then comes from this wideness and vastness. No effort, but letting go. No names. No - Thing. No sound - but silence, stillness."

Because all of the Who-is are facets of a single thing - each time we are in true relationship to who we are, where we are, without judgement - but with care and sincerity - we help that who is continue on its journey of constant change. When we help the small and separate, we see its secret heart is really vast and open. When we help the vast and open, we see it also depends upon the small and particular. In this way, the who-we-are changeable like the tides, leads us to the next step. And, since each step is holy, we are never apart from the whole. It is available in its tiny grandeur at every moment.

When you know this to be true, when you have a body sense of this being true - you can enter something that we could call the Great Faith that cannot be Shaken. We can also call it the on-going-love-of God - which someone else usually helps us remember.

Our lives become ever more clearly an expression of this truth.

Jamie Mirman
"His Truest Nature"



John Cavanaugh and Eileen Marder-
Mirman

Singing Niggun

Ian Bain and Brenda Blessings

DePoort, Netherlands

picture taken by Henrik Nordmark

Rick Gondelman
and Heidi Jost
At the All
School Meeting
2009

picture by Jamie
Mirman



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