

It was early winter in my senior year in high school. The winds of change were blowing through my life. Soon I would graduate and move out of the family home to attend the University of Colorado in Boulder. What a relief! Conflict with parents is common during late teenage years, and I experienced some of this. I would have to register for the draft in July. If I didn't go to college - I was sure I was going to go - I would likely be swept up into the big Vietnam War Machine. I was questioning the point of the war and the politics behind it. I had many questions. Who would I become without my family, my friends and my high school? I was starting to search for my place in the world and the meaning of my life.

My mind was searching for understanding. I had read some Ayn Rand as background information for an economics class. Then I read more. She was the first philosopher I experienced. She stated that we could use our reason to make sense of the world and find truth. She had escaped from the Soviet Union and loved capitalism and individualism. In her novels her characters were grandly heroic individuals. I was attracted by her ideas of reason and truth. I wanted to use my reason to find meaning and direction. It did seem as though love was missing in her philosophical world view; she came across somewhat harshly at times.

At the same time I read a biography on Edgar Cayce called There is a River. This book chronicled the life of a Southern Baptist who became a medical trance healer. Eventually his readings veered off from healing into mystery religions, past lives, astrology, and other exotic topics. Finally, a sort of Christianized reincarnation philosophy was purposed. Everybody made it; there was no hell, unless you made it for yourself. And there was always a way out. (This was good, because when I had first heard about the idea of hell as a child, I was completely sure no God would really be into eternal torture like the minister was saying.) Love was clearly the main idea of the Cayce book, and an evolving, uplifting of consciousness through lifetimes.

I was alone in my philosophical searching. No one I knew was reading these books, or thinking about these ideas. No one at my church ever discussed anything like Cayce's ideas. Ayn Rand was symbolized as truth, and Cayce was love, in my mind. I was deeply attracted to both ways of viewing the world. I was downstairs in my basement bedroom. I put a stack of records on my stereo. I paced back and forth trying to make sense of the two divergent ideas. Truth or love, truth or love, I pondered. Back and forth. Back and forth. Truth or love?

Suddenly there was light. Golden light. A vast presence engulfed me. So immense I could not comprehend it. So gigantic it was beyond belief. I was aware of love and in some incomprehensible way: I was not separate from it. There was no fear because I was part of it all. I knew that the truth was love, and that love was the truth: they were not separate. The universe made sense! And I was part of it! Everything balanced. All was beautiful, whole and perfect, and I was a part of it! Levels of meaning I could not understand seemed to pass through me. Everything connected. Nothing left out. Infinite, beyond words. Wonderful beyond imagining.

Then I looked around to see where the golden light was coming from. Maybe it was reflecting off a car windshield or something? I looked outside the window. Then suddenly I was aware of the whole experience in the same way you awaken from a dream: the whole of it in view, and then you are looking at it from the past.

I had no idea if I was in the light or the light was in me. I had no idea how much time had passed. An instant or an hour, no idea. That truth was love, and love was the truth, and I was a part of it somehow- that was clear, but now somewhat distant. My memory of the event, the afterglow was almost intoxicating, but just a pale shadow to the real experience. I was amazed and already I missed the feeling of unity. The light was gone.

I sat on my bed and soaked it all in. After a while I stood up. The universe I stood in was filled with meaning, love and truth. The path of my life was inclined in some way towards the direction of the experience; in some very subtle way I would continue to live in that universe even as I would seek to know it more fully. Joy, surprise, amazement and gratitude filled me.

I didn't tell any one about what had happened for quite a while. I didn't know anyone reading Rand or Cayce. I didn't know anyone who would believe such an experience; there were times I scarcely believed it myself. The experience was the most private and personal in my life. It was a great relief to finally tell a friend a year later.

A glimpse of the magnificent did not provide all the answers, but I knew there were answers. Given both love and reason, I attempted to follow both as well as I could with my almost eighteen years of experience of life on the planet. There were so many more questions to answer. My life was just beginning.

In a philosophy class at the University of Colorado two years later we studied William James's The Varieties of Religious Experience. I was relieved to know I was not the only one. "We pass into mystical states from out of ordinary consciousness as from a lesser into a more, as from a smallness into a vastness, and at the same time as from unrest to a rest. We feel them as reconciling: unifying states... in them the unlimited absorbs the limits and peacefully closes the account."