

Immortality

My father loved the joys of the material world. He just had to obtain the fastest motorcycle ever produced at the time, a 1984 Kawasaki 900 Ninja. I think my father enjoyed it until it scared him and then he gave it to me. It wasn't necessarily my style, but what American boy could have said no to such an adventure? After all, this was the same motorcycle that Tom Cruise drove in Top Gun. Furthermore, my father had already initiated me into motocross racing at 11 and so I knew what the thrill of danger was. I was a totally crazy and somehow survived the most terrible accidents; flying off of my motorcycle while my little skinny body soared 12 feet over the ground at 60 mph while the other motorcycles were flying over me and landing almost on top of me. I recalled those thrills and decided I could re-live this again with the Ninja. Everybody wanted to ride on it and some friends even wanted to drive it. My best friend had one arm that did not have a fore arm. He just had a little "stub" after the elbow, like a tiny little finger about half an inch long. He insisted that he drive it. I couldn't say anything, agree or disagree. He just looked at me and said, "Are you prejudiced against me because of my handicap? I have a little stub on my elbow that can grab the clutch." "Well, you do play the guitar very well with your stub", I said. That was the only time being on the motorcycle ever scarred me, especially when he got comfortable driving it and tried to bring the front wheel off of the ground at 50 mph. He knew he could get away with anything and he started to take it without my permission and give rides to the rest of my friends. He even taught other people how to drive it.

After high school I moved to Austin to study. I didn't use the motorcycle much but enjoyed it thoroughly when I did. I used to drive home once a month to visit my mother. It was a 3 hour trip that I turned in to just two hours. I had good vision and could see far ahead. I knew the road since childhood and knew where the police could be running radar. I felt justified in this because my back began to hurt after 2 hours and so I wanted to make the trip as short as possible. I had just started meditating and had become much calmer and a little less adventurous. I spent more time reading books and being with my intellectual and artistic friends and family members (from my mother's side). My girlfriend left me because she said I loved Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky more than her. I was happy being alone, somewhere between the dimming material freedoms of my past and a subtle, still inchoate hope of discovering true mysticism. However, one day on a trip home a group of frat boys passed me at 120 mph while I was doing 90. They were laughing at me in a fun, playful manner but at the same time wanted to compete because they saw a Kawasaki Ninja and knew that most of the people that drove them were Tom Cruise want-to-bes. I down shifted 2 gears, gave a full throttle and passed them at 135 mph. I had never done this before but knew that this rocket

was capable of this. I suppose I had a certain pride in that I had all of this reserve power that I never used. It was there and available, but such things aren't necessary.

It was exhilarating. My mind became so focused. Every movement was critical; a gust of wind or a small pebble could have caused me to go flying off my rocket and lose my skin. My mind became so focused that it really was not possible to think but just to flow. The intense focus of my mind made me aware that there was some inner 'other' accompanying me, a silent witness that only observed, yet under this observation the mind understands how to flow and act intuitively. All of the senses are so acutely alive, the sound of the wind, the force of the air against the motorcycle, the passing lines on the highway; all of these intensely, simultaneous perceptions made me aware of something so great, a deep feeling of "I" accompanying me. My mind was perfectly still and I could not think. There was no fear, just attention. After just a short time at 135 mph a thought came into my mind and said "okay, that was great, but don't push your luck." It was as if that silent witness infused and inspired some judicious thoughts within so as to calm the thrill.

I became obsessed with the idea of immortality. I was compelled to find that experience again but without the high speed motorcycle. I felt the witness was always there and that the only thing between me and That were my thoughts. Yet when I began to think upon this Presence I found my thoughts begin to change. They seemed perfectly rational and responsible. At the same time I became very aware of what was irrational and impulsive in me. My heart was opening up and I felt love for all. I felt this to the degree that my thoughts coincided with my inner self, and if my thoughts did not coincide, then my witness was there as devil's advocate, showing me the shadow only to show me the way out. Sometimes these thoughts were uncomfortable and I would wake up at night thinking, "If there really does exist this immortality, then why are we playing all of these games in this silly world? Should one not dedicate all to It?" After that I no longer made the Dean's List.

I was initiated into a Rajadhiraja Tantra Yoga tradition when I was a student in Austin in 1993. I adopted a very healthy vegetarian lifestyle without drugs and alcohol. Within a few months the kundalini began with what would be a very long and intense awakening. As a student of psychology and world literature, I had heard of kundalini and other mystical energies but I had never thought they were real, live forces. I thought it was just interesting archaic symbolism, and not an actual force within the human body that rises up through the spinal column to awaken higher states of awareness. The universal symbol for this force is the serpent. It is said to be a covert, spiritual force beneath the surface of conscious

awareness, like a coiled snake. Kundalini is the fundamental intelligence behind life and evolution, waiting to be awakened when the mind finally desires liberation from finite mental bondages. As this divine “serpent power” rises through the spinal column, one experiences states of deep spiritual realization. For the yogi, kundalini is the force that unites the human with the divine.

One day after classes and a short meditation, at which I was merely a beginner, I laid down on my back due to exhaustion. I felt a soothing force begin to rise up my spine. As this point of white, soft energy rose up into the thoracic region of the spine, I began to hear the sacred Om sound. It became frightening because there was only Om and nothing else. I opened my eyes but could not see anything. My faculties of sight and hearing were unified and there only existed Om. I knew I was being dissolved in a force that was vibrating within every particle of the universe. It was ecstatic and exhilarating but terrifying. I felt my whole identity would disappear and never return. The kundalini was entering the medulla. I began to repeat my mantra for meditation but it only made the experience more intense. Instead, I began to repeat my birth name, William Ernest Enckhausen III, over and over and trying to remember that I was a student in Austin, Texas on the physical plane of reality. The kundalini began to go back down as Om diminished. I couldn't take any more.

After that experience I became very confident but experienced a lot of mental turmoil. It was very productive turmoil in that all negative memories from my past were being quickly purged and purified. I began to feel completely whole and that I had already lived a very complete life. The second time the kundalini rose was a few months later. I saw the same light in my spine although this time it was an infinitesimally small point. Physical reality disappeared and I began to “see” from the crown of my head a turquoise bird flying closer and closer as the point rose higher and higher. The bird landed on the crown of my head at the same time the point rose to the same place. Heaven and earth had met and I was lost in an infinite web of sound vibration where I could no longer see even this beautiful vision.

My last thought before losing awareness of not just the outer world, but also the inner world of vision, was that the forms looked Meso-American. Only years later would I learn of the Mesoamerican concept of kundalini, what they call *Quetzalcoatl*, the Plumed Serpent. The *quetzal* is a colorful bird of Chiapas and the Mayan symbol for the *kundalini*, the spiritual energy of evolution and enlightenment that resides dormant within the mind. The Quetzal-kundalini awakens the inner spirit that soars only towards the infinite sky. I adopted Quetzal as my pen name when I began to study Tantra Maya years later.

This same image was named Quetzalcoatl by the Toltecs and Kulkulkan by the Mayas. A version of the image of Quetzalcoatl is on the Mexican national flag to this day.



After this experience I lost all interest in a career and marriage and a “normal” life. I barely graduated the university and went to India seeking more understanding. There I met Chidghananda, a solitary old monk well-venerated in his order. He was regarded as a saint and I felt so honored that he took me into his close friendship and care. Sometimes I would accompany him with his evening meditations. He always heard the holy Om sound and it increased in his meditation. It was obvious that he regularly experienced ananda, divine bliss. He was truly one of the most loving human beings that I have ever met. My experiences had intensified near him at Ananda Nagar and it was clearly divine will that I had met such a teacher to guide me through these powerful processes.

At the time I wanted to become a monk but Chidghananda himself told me that I was a bit of an oddity and would not fit in well with the monastic organization. He said that my spiritual work was coming to an end, and that I didn’t really need to do anything else with my life rather than meditate, live simply, and help others as much as I could. Although sharply criticized for his influence over me, he followed his conscience and spoke only the truth to me. Although very confused as to what to do with my life once the ideal of being a monk was fading, I was aided by a dream in which Anandmurti commanded me not to worry about becoming a monk, but just to “see the world as a frame-less photo and wander through the night.” Anandamurti has always spoken to me through dreams in such an elevated, poetic fashion. Later, as a confirmation he told me in another vivid dream that “all that matters is to do dhyana dasha.” He used those Sanskrit words, one of which I knew of not until a friend looked it up in a Sanskrit dictionary. What Anandamurti said was “all that matters is to do service through meditation.” I was often unsure if in these dreams I communicated with the spirit of Anandamurti, or if Anandamurti had become a mere symbol in my consciousness that had penetrated my dreams. Either way, these dreams always

made perfect sense to me and enlightened difficult situations. If they were my own projections, then they came from the deepest, most intuitive parts of me that have never let me down.

All of the unresolved questions that remained for me about the mystical experiences of my childhood and youth were answered in those brief years I was living with yogic monks and nuns. Before that, I had many deep and powerful experiences that my friends also shared and experienced with me. My mother always believed me and helped me find some answers to these mysteries. She introduced me to her friends that meditated and practiced yoga.

Such experiences were blasts of clarity and insight that always seemed to occur with interesting existential and emotional “synchronicities” connected with my friends and family since childhood. However, it was when I learned tantric meditation that all of these experiences became clearly understood. It was as if these earlier experiences needed to be cleared up in my mind so as to make space for newer experiences.

And so it was; the more I assimilated the earlier mysteries, the more I experienced newer ones. By the time I went to India I started entering in states of deep, breathless meditation. It was as if I were dead but my mind was very active on the inside, processing memories of those deep experiences in my youth with friends and family. Everything made sense and all was good.....my family and friends gave me everything.....breathlessness.....it is morning...

Chidghananda said my work was done. I no longer had a past, or I was no longer tied to my past. What now?, I wondered. As time went by he started to speak of the future, as if he really wanted to tell me something important about not just my future but the future of humanity. I began to have very uncomfortable experiences and visions after those very blissful trances. Everything that I experienced was sublime yet terrible. I saw so much suffering and knew that there would be difficult times ahead.

At the same time I met another yogi who gave me another piece to the puzzle. I didn't know him at all but we liked each other instantly and he started to tell me very interesting and insightful tips that seemed to be exactly what I needed. He told me that yogis could consciously invoke the “Near Death Experience” with certain yogic techniques. In such a state, one can see what one needs to see, and all of the way into eternity. He said that I could enter into the Hall of the Immortals and ask any liberated being any question that I wanted. He gave me the technique, I practiced it and indeed verified that he was correct, that yogis can invoke the near death experience through meditation.

I saw my whole life flash in front of me. I remember many, many of these vivid visions but recall with each new experience in life a feeling of deja vu and realize that I have already seen this too. I saw everything in that vision, yet I consciously remember fragments. When I have deja vu, there is no mystery of where the feeling of familiarity comes from; the familiarity came from the fact that I had already seen this part of the drama unfold in that near death experience, or what really became a series of near-death experiences. It is like when a friend shares a memory with you. It was the same experience but when he or she recalls it to you then you remember the picture more completely. You hadn't forgotten those aspects, they were just unconscious. Similarly, when I would have feelings of deja vu I would contemplate on where I actually did experience that memory and actually recalled when and where and it the origin always came back to those experiences of near death, in the eternal now. Near death is so close to Life.

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