

Nothing of You Remains

by Robert Cergol

During the winter of 2000, the following correspondence occurred between Bob and two long-time TAT Foundation members. These letters provide a deeper insight into Bob's November 1999 Experience.

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Hello Dave,

I will try to answer your question, "What happened and what can you tell me," knowing in advance that the first word creates a 'lie' in that it voices a dichotomy which I found does not exist in reality.

Something did happen to me. It was triggered by a statement Pulyan made in a letter to Rose in response to the question what happens to us after death.

Pulyan replied,

"Regarding the question:

The body dies and is dissipated.

The mind is one with it at all times and is therefore also dissipated.

Nothing of you remains. There is no survival or reincarnation or 'immortal soul,' 'conscious entity.' "

Intellectually I had long known that "I am not the body" and of course that the body dies. I had even convinced myself that I understood how the ego was a fiction and a by-product of this "in-the-body" experience. Yet, behind it all I held to the notion that I was at least the mind -- and that mind somehow was or contained the soul of Bob Cergol -- something spiritual and eternal.

When I read Pulyan's words regarding the mind being one with the body at all times and therefore also dissipating, etc. something registered. "Nothing of you remains" was the clincher. In that instant a switch was flipped and the process ignited. It was late and I was very tired at the time. I felt dumbstruck. I put it out of my mind and went to bed.

Without getting into my state-of-mind at that time and the details of my life in preceding years, suffice it to say that it was not what I wanted to hear, certainly not would I expected or hoped to read from Pulyan. The thought kept rolling around in my head, "He's right! But where does that leave me?"

I awoke the next morning with the same heavy feeling over me. As I went about my daily business (you see I had built for myself a very robust treadmill which inexorably funneled my body and mind through the established daily regimen) I somehow felt different -- dissociated or

detached from myself -- as though I were watching myself. I didn't have time to dwell on this feeling or thought -- except that between phone calls, between activities, between any break in the treadmill thought, this consciousness would assert itself and I would feel the sense of being outside of myself -- watching.

I noticed this feeling as something beckoning me to follow it deeper. Part of me wanted to stop and dive into it but part of me needed to ignore it, the part of me on the treadmill. (In fact I think this dichotomy was helpful in keeping this 'crack' open.) This continued over the next several days. The first thing I would do on waking in the morning was to put my feet on the floor and check -- to see if the same odd experience of me was present. It always was (and has, so far, never left).

I was growing more obsessed with facing it head on. I had this intense desire to go within and enquire into the depths of this feeling -- if feeling is even the right word -- wanting to know **WHAT IS THIS**. Very oddly, a peak occurred for me while I was driving my car. (I have this notion now that driving intensified the focus inward since the body was occupied and the perceptual machinery was surrounded by movement and this perception of movement increased the sensation of "feeling as a witness at the center" of all that movement.) Anyway, an intensity of awareness built until at some instant the entire world -- including ME -- was **OUT THERE** -- part of the view. Yet there was no dichotomy because this awareness also **CONTAINED** the whole view, the totality. In that instant I saw there was **NO DEATH** -- because there was **NOTHING TO DIE!** In that instant I saw the equality of all beings, their essential unity -- they were all manifestations from the same ground.

The treadmill kept going. At no time was I not conscious of a manifest world out there which included the fictional character Bob Cergol. I felt no emotion when this was happening except for a trace of startlement. I remember repeating out loud to myself, "There is no death! There is no death!" I don't know how long this lasted, maybe 20 minutes. But even one instant is sufficient and cannot be forgotten.

This intensity subsided, but for the next couple weeks it was still very immediate, just below the surface. I had to go on a business trip and I remember how in between sentences in conversation with people -- whenever there was any break in activity which required my attention to focus "out there" -- my attention would revert back to "in here" where there was only impersonal awareness.

Several months later, the intensity waxes and wanes, but is rarely close to what it was during that peak. I spent a lot of time puzzling over just what happened and how to interpret it. This largely stemmed from the relative mind and my notions of how a genuine realization was supposed to put me on a stretcher being carried out by other people....that and the fact that my personality did not cease. I continue to function as Bob Cergol, but I know that I am the inner -- impersonal, unborn and undying -- awareness that lights the personal consciousness of Bob Cergol.

This experience has not made me a teacher. It has not given me wisdom. Yet everything I go back and reread of Rose's or Maharshi's has a new immediacy of meaning for me. I have a

conviction now regarding my source, who I am and what will happen to me and I feel inner peace....At times I also feel like screaming because this feeling of alone-ness won't go away.

I need to wrap this email up so I'd like to close with a few words I recently used to attempt to express how this existence seems to me to be:

These forms are like peep-holes, through which the Absolute gazes -- back into itSelf. In that process, these forms become animated, and the thought arises, that the form is the self. In reality that form is nothing more than a vision -- for only the source itSelf is.

That seed thought, that the form is the self, gives rise to the whole creation in which we believe we live. Anyone can realize this since it is their true nature right now -- but you have to be willing to let go of ALL that you believe yourself to be. A major obstacle to doing this is not accepting totally everything about yourself right now. I know that doesn't sound Rose-an, but confrontation was directed at the ego which would maintain itself by picking and choosing aspects to conform to the image it wants to be and project. This inevitably means rejecting and hiding pieces of ourselves from ourselves. You have to accept the good, the bad and the ugly -- not just the "good."

Take care Dave,
Bob

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Hello Steve,

In [the online discussion group] you asked me, "...what's the next step? Where's the angst?"

My "existential" angst evaporated around the time of last November 12th when I made contact with the impersonal Awareness behind my personal individuality. The initial depression triggered by Pulyan's statement, that the body perishes and the mind which is at all times one with that body likewise perishes, gave way to a direct knowing that he was right. When this experience peaked for me over the next several days, I realized there is no death! There was nothing to die. The awareness I felt was ALL that there was. My identity was "somewhere out there" along with everything else moving -- none of which was real.

I have gotten my answer to: "Where did I come from? Who am I? and Where am I going?" And I understand too, why Rose always said, "But I don't know how many hairs are on your head."

In a way my experience was gentle and that puzzled me. (The old ego gestalt of inadequacy wanted to doubt.) My expectation was always that someone would have to carry me out on a stretcher, etc. This is not to say that it lacked intensity or was pleasant. It was intense but without any emotion except a tinge of startlement. In fact it connected for me all the various experiences

which have happened to me over the years beginning with my first meeting with Rose. I now see the common denominator in all of them -- and the difference.

The common denominator was the connection with this impersonal awareness. The difference was that always in the past, I *experienced* these through ego-based self, which is to say I maintained my identification with Bob Cergol. (And I also ascribed the transcendent feelings to the personage of Richard Rose.) Some of those experiences were quite upsetting -- mental and emotional anguish. The most intense one occurred 4 years ago and lasted several hours. I called Rose but he was too far gone to help me -- at least not verbally. More recently, the Spring TAT meeting last year, when Art asked me a question about death, I broke down in the meeting and could barely speak. We went to visit Rose the next day (Come to think of it you were at that meeting, but you arrived to visit Rose just as we were all leaving.) Rose and I stood looking out the window together. I was still feeling shaky and upset. He reached over and took hold of my hand and said, "There's no one here is there." He was right. That's exactly the state I was in and it was upsetting. I hadn't yet completely included myself in that "no one."

The difference with this recent realization was that I was no longer there either (but there was still awareness) and it was non-emotional -- at least after the dulling depressed feeling which was there in the beginning went away. In fact, the first time I told anybody about it, at our Wednesday night meeting here, I said it wasn't really an experience. I struggled for words -- and still do -- I don't know how to explain it. But the "experiencer" Bob Cergol is not who made contact with this awareness. He was contained in it, i.e. I was aware of "him" being "out there" with everything else. [Richard Rose] writes "He cannot see me as I see him." and "Who is it that looks out the windows of my mansion like a strange prowler. Who speaks words with my tongue, etc."

I still feel awkward in talking about it but am becoming less inhibited. I've always been very slow to reveal my interior life to others -- not out of embarrassment and not out of fear. (I do not require 3rd party validation for my inner life and do not seek it.) My hesitancy was in part from feeling inadequate at verbalizing and in part from a feeling that things sacred to oneself should not be given out too casually. A certain rapport and/or setting had to exist for me to be comfortably able to verbalize.

Since this has happened I am somehow different but still the same. My personality with all its gestalts has not become perfected -- it is still exactly the same. I seem continuously dissociated from it to varying degrees. Sure I get absorbed in activity -- during which I fall asleep -- but I seem to be able to at any time, just stop, and "remember" and I wake up. The intensity waxes and wanes. Making an effort to do so doesn't work. Its more like stopping and listening and relaxing. So far, it has always been available. The first month or so after it happened, in the morning when I woke up, the first thing I would do would sit on the edge of the bed to check and see if I still felt like someone else was looking out with my eyes and thinking thoughts I was aware of.

I'm not sure what the mechanics of "the next step" are for me, but I am simultaneously more motivated than ever to be active in interaction with others involved in the search for spiritual meaning, while not feeling like I need to rearrange my life to force those events and circumstances to manifest. I want to write my thoughts down. I want to be able to tell my story

accurately and understandably starting with my early memories with Rose. I want to learn how to recognize how others are binding themselves.

In the immediate weeks following my realization I was somewhat obsessed with the thought of how does this get triggered? Pulyan gave the answer. One must quit the egocentric position. And he said you cannot do it without an outside fulcrum. His statement, "that the mind which is one with the body at all times, perishes with the body," was the immediate fulcrum which permitted me to quit the egocentric position which allowed me to become aware. I am sure it would have meant nothing to me without the previous years of association with Rose.

Anyone can do it, but you MUST finally give up the conviction that you are going to succeed in preserving yourself. How would YOU feel if you could do this. Just where would that leave YOU!?

Bob

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Bob provided the following answer in response to a set of questions posed in an online discussion group. In Bob's words, it was "...extremely meaningful and poignant to me and was fairly soon after the original realization, so it captures my more immediate reaction to the event."

Where is Bob in terms of the personality/idiosyncrasies. Do you still see some value in "becoming a vector"? Does anyone ever become a perfect vector or is it an on going process?

In an absolute sense we are already the result of a perfect vector. But in this life-induced drunkenness, it is difficult to accept what is and so we subvert this perfect vector. We work against it -- trying to express the ego, or outer man, instead of working to let the inner man manifest fully. Becoming is finding our way back to the central theme of the universe and living in harmony with it. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." [It] is letting our lives become the perfect manifestation of it -- that which is -- truly us.

"Where is Bob?" Bob is lost in his personality and its idiosyncrasies and lost in life. I can see him but he can't see Me. I am trying to take over his life but he is hanging on to patterns that have become precious and beautiful to him because he witnessed them as "things apart," with no permanent substance, but only as themes that echo Me. I showed him that he was not, for I alone AM. And in that seeing he was perfectly content and accepted everything as it is. But he cannot exist in life as he exists in death and he has still to learn how to live while abiding in Me.

Bob C.

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After his realization, Bob wrote the following poem, titled The Other Side. In a September 2005 email message, he wrote: "...it is a far better description or account of what the realization meant to me and the perspective that it brought to me."

The Other Side -- **Bob Cergol**

What sound was it that you first heard
That made those ears your ears to hear?
*And in such hearing spawned the fear
Of the other side -- the silence here.*

What sight was it that you first saw
That made those eyes your eyes to see?
*And in such seeing spawned the vision
An "I" in loneliness imprisoned.*

What movement made first filled your breath
And made that breath your own to breathe?
*And in such moving brought the gasp
That one such breath will be your last.*

What shape was made with flesh and bone
That made that form your form alone?
*A mortal form where thoughts resolved
That "I" as form, will be dissolved.*

What story told first touched your heart
And made its theme a "thing apart"?
*That heartfelt telling does portend --
Where flow life's rhythms -- all will end.*

What words were they that left those lips
Through which the Source became eclipsed?
*In darkness, separate shadows grew
As animated forms, with speech imbued.*

What choice occurred that made that choice
The one to which, you lent your voice?
*And in that lending broke apart
From That -- the center of your heart.*

What thing is this that strives to *BE*
An individuality?
-- It's just an echo of the other side
In which all things here, do abide.

From the other side your being came
On this side comes identity.
From the other side there comes the call
"Your Self is here, not there at all."

On the other side of "I am this"
Is "I am not." and "I am nothing."
But -- in that nothing -- is your Being
And in that Being -- everything.