

Southwest Leather Conference Endnote Speech

What Lies Beyond? by slave Rick

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When I was invited to present the endnote speech at this year's SWLC, my very first reaction was a brief, but immediate contraction in fear. This was fleetingly followed by the old, familiar mental pull toward a self deprecating inner dialogue that doubts my worthiness and that, in the past, has characterized my particular egoic style of self perpetuated suffering.

Will I be able to do this? I have never done an endnote. Is there something inspirational I can offer? What if I make a fool of myself or embarrass my Master?

Luckily, there have been enough experiences of clarity in my life to realize that such crazy self talk need not be taken too seriously nor does it warrant very much of my attention. Also recognized, was the importance of removing the "I" from each question.

If there is no "I" that needs to write and deliver an endnote speech, no "I" that is trying to be inspirational, no "I" that is worried about seeming the fool, then there is space as well as true receptivity and openness for something greater than **my** small egoic self to express. Then the words can flow onto the page with little effort or struggle.

After all, isn't that what living the surrendered life of slave is all about?

I was informed that the logo for the conference depicted the four elements of earth, air, fire and water with a view of the horizon or earth's edge inviting an investigation of what lies beyond these elements. I was further told that, upon seeing the logo with this image of what lies beyond, the Executive Committee immediately thought of me for the endnote.

I think that's an acknowledgement and not simply an affirmation that I seem to live pretty far out there in "Woo-ville"!

As I reflected on the four elements, it seemed clear that these elements are what comprise our physical world as well as our earthly, material experience. After all, our physical bodies contain the elements of the earth especially carbon. These bodies must be continually sustained by the atmosphere or the very air and oxygen we breathe. They can emote with the fiery expression of rage or passion. And, according to medical literature, these bodies are, conservatively, at least 60 to 70% water. All of these four elements of earth, air, fire and water are essential for our physical survival when incarnating into form for another semester of earth school.

But ultimately, what are the lessons we are to learn here? Why are we here? What is beyond the struggle to survive and the pursuit of money, success, power, position and sex in the hopes of finding security, happiness and fulfillment?

And, how in the heck is incarnating as a “kinky” person related to any of this? Is our “kinkiness” God’s joke to make it tougher? Is God just a big sadist that likes to watch us squirm? Or, is there truly a special gift in our kink that powerfully and organically guides us toward what lies beyond.

Clearly, I believe the last statement to be the most accurate.

Just look at some of the opportunities our kink provides.

Anyone who has ever heard Master Skip or His slave offer a workshop, knows it all starts with the thudding, pounding, stinging sensations caused by the percussive impact implements that draw our attention fully into the present moment, into the NOW.

Where are we most of the time if not in the present moment?

Well, alot of us are off telling stories in our heads regardless of whether those stories have any basis in reality.

Some of us tell ourselves scary stories about the future and what might happen if..... ? These stories often get covered over with a false sense of bravado and an imitation of bravery or courage as a defense.

Some of us tell ourselves angry stories about the past, of how we have been victimized or how unjust the world and its inhabitants behave. These stories can cause us to act like anything from a bully to a social reformer in order to avoid feeling our own helplessness and lack of ultimate control in life.

Some of us, like me, tend to tell ourselves critical stories of unworthiness, of not being enough, and may even cover over this deflation with an inflated sense of superiority or entitlement to protect a fragile ego. Doesn’t that just fit perfectly with this slave’s “Jewish Prince” archetype?!

But, there is nowhere to hide once the flogger hits, once the paddle or cane strikes, once the single tail slices. And, voila.... Catharsis!

All the buried crap, all the stuff too scary to face, all the things that seem too painful to bear rise to the surface to be let go. Otherwise, how can we possibly be in the present moment when so much of our energy and life force goes into holding all this buried stuff down and away?

For some, the catharsis, the letting go, the endorphin high, the deep relaxation that follows is enough. In fact, for some, it can become downright addictive! I speak from experience!

But let's not stop here. There is "farther beyond" to go.

After catharsis, like in meditation, there can be an experience of deep peace, of profound stillness, of heightened awareness, a glimpse at an ego-less state where there is total connection and oneness.

An SM session can allow us to become aware—aware of our physical sensations, aware of our emotions, aware of our thoughts. All of these "things" of which we are aware are the objects of our awareness. However, we are not the objects of our awareness, we are not any object at all, or any form, we are not any "thing", we are "no"-thing. Instead, we are the Awareness itself that is conscious of those objects.

By witnessing the thoughts, the stories and the emotions that get triggered there is an opportunity, perhaps for the very first time, to dis-identify from the thoughts and the stories and thus briefly experience a shift in identity from being the content of the mind to being the Awareness in the background that is conscious of the content of the mind. There is great freedom in the recognition that we exist without our stories.

With just the slightest shift in perception, that Awareness then becomes conscious of Itself as the intelligent empty space within which all of the objects of awareness appear.

That spacious Awareness is what holds all objects of awareness. It holds everything. It is who we truly ARE. It is that internal luminosity that, right in this moment, somehow already knows what is being said. It's deeper than the conditioning of this lifetime. It is what in you recognizes Truth when it is heard even when it isn't rationally or intellectually understood by the binary, dualistic egoic mind. This is the birthing of "Heart Perception" since Truth waves are transmitted at the Heart frequency, not the mind frequency.

When there is no longer an "I" as subject aware of a thought as object, duality momentarily ceases and what remains is pure, pristine Presence; empty, Intelligent space; who we ARE beyond the false egoic identification with the physical body or the material world.

This is not a dissociative process, but rather one of deep connection and contact with our very Essence, our Spiritual core.

Now we're getting closer to what lies beyond!

Now we are talking about the real purpose of an incarnation, to embody the Transcendent.

Now we are talking about the I AM Consciousness awakening to Itself rather than continuing to suffer and remain enslaved in the egoic dream or Maya or illusion of being any form or object, be it a form as gross as a physical body or as subtle as an emotion or a thought.

As I use the word ego today, I am not speaking in psychological or analytic terms. I am describing ego as the false separated self that we mistake ourselves to be. When pointing to what lies beyond, we are speaking of awakening to and realizing our true identity as Consciousness itself rather than what Consciousness had previously identified with or mistakenly attached itself to.

As Eckhart Tolle says, the ultimate truth of who you are is not I am this or I am that but simply I AM.

This is what Paramahansa Yogananda meant when he said: This can wait and that can wait but your search for God cannot wait. In other words, your search for your Self with a capital "S" can't wait, it is the very reason you are here.

The I AM is the true Self, the immortal God Self that we are.

So, we have gotten a glimpse, we have gotten a taste of what lies beyond. And, how interesting that the glimpse was facilitated by some of the BDSM practices that are such an intrinsic part of our uniquely "kink" orientation.

Coincidence? I think not!

Let's look a bit further into how our "kink" paves the way for experiencing what lies beyond.

Many of us are in D/s and Master/slave relationships in which the word "devotion" is often heard.

What about Devotion? Isn't this a spiritual quality that fits quite naturally and organically with O/our lifestyle?

In my experience most slaves, including this one, blossom and flourish when there is a direction toward which they can focus their devotion. When devotion is not simply an abstract idea or concept, but where there is a living Master or Mistress onto whom the slave can focus their adoration and their worship, the slave heart bursts open and out flows this incredible bhakti or devotional aspect of it's own nature.

Although certainly not a Master, Dom or Owner myself, I still imagine devotion is similarly but differently experienced by these folks.

For Masters, and I use that title to include Doms and Owners, what must it be like to own this most prized and cherished possession?

What must it be like to receive such adoration, not from a place of ego inflation, but from a simple willingness to just let the love in?

What must it be like to bear witness to this living embodiment of Master's training, of Master's protocol, of Master's example, of Master's word made flesh!

Given all of the above, I can't help but imagine that Masters also experience a burst of heart opening devotion in relation to their slaves, subs and property.

And, since in my experience devotion and it's close relative gratitude are absolutely **irresistible** to Grace, what an amazing lifestyle that so fluidly and seamlessly attracts more Grace into O/our lives simply as a byproduct of what comes naturally to U/us!

Another way that we are "wired" to experience what lies beyond.

And it isn't even about effort or trying. If anyone saw the movie, Who Framed Roger Rabbit, and recalls the sexy Jessica Rabbit, like Jessica, we aren't naughty, we are just simply drawn that way.

And, it is only in the full and complete acceptance and embracing of "how we have been drawn" that the possibility exists to experience the Grace of what lies beyond.

How cool is that?

A bit more about those of us in D/s or Master/slave relationships.

Upon reading each Master/slave pair or grouping's chapter in slave david stein's book, Ask the Man Who Owns him, it becomes quite clear that there is no "one" way to be Master and slave. Still, there seem to be common elements in every protocol cited in the book that involve some level of obedience.

What about this obedience thing? How is it related to what lies beyond?

As the slave practices obedience to the Master and the Master practices obedience to something greater than Him or Herself, there are often times when each must face and meet "resistance" before the "Order" is fluidly and immediately followed.

Resistance is when the egoic mind says, "Don't do that, I know better! I am right. I'd rather it be like this than like that."

Isn't this the ancient tale of Lucifer, the most beautiful angel who arrogantly came to believe he knew better than God and was subsequently banished from Heaven only to exert influence over the earthly, material plane?

Isn't this the story of the first fall from Grace, even before Adam and Eve, when the egoic mind, symbolized by Lucifer, believed it knew better than the Divine and descended so deeply into the gross material realm that Lucifer eventually forgot how to hear the Beloved's heavenly voice within?

Is this just a myth that appears in scriptural texts or is this truly a metaphor that describes our own communal story and family history as a human species tribe...the story of the Soul incarnating into a physical form and forgetting what lies beyond?

At birth, don't we seem to forget our Divine origins and mistakenly learn to trust the voice of the egoic mind that seeks to satisfy mostly selfish needs and desires geared toward survival, animal defenses and posturing in the pursuit of what "it" says will bring safety and happiness?

Doesn't this voice often become so loud that it drowns out the deeper voice of God within us until we forget that a deeper voice even exists?

Yet, we practice obedience, something very natural and organic to this lifestyle. And, through practice, we become more disciplined.

Isn't it interesting that the word discipline and disciple have a common root?

Through the discipline of obedience to our inner orders as well as the practices that bring us into the present moment and the open hearted devotion that automatically attracts Grace, we become "kinky disciples", instruments that are more finely attuned, more inwardly quiet.

As selfish desires diminish, Lucifer's voice loses its power and the portal re-opens to remember and directly experience another voice.

Whether you call this the voice of the Awakened Heart the voice of the Master/God/The Universe/Nature/Intuition, the Authentic voice or the voice of your own Soul doesn't really matter.

What's in a name when trying to label that which is so vast, it can't be confined within the limits of any one word? It is beyond name, it is nameless. That is why in Hebrew, the name of God is not to be written. That which is Infinite cannot be confined within the boundaries of any one limited written word.

So what you call "It", doesn't really matter. What matters is the increased ability to hear that voice and the discipline to be faithful and obedient to that inward voice trusting that only It can lead us to our highest good and our ultimate destiny of true fulfillment in this lifetime.

This can be especially difficult when that voice contradicts the egoic voice focused on what “I” think, what “I” want, what “I” believe will make “me” feel good or make “me” happy.

These are the times to be especially vigilant because Lucifer or the voice of egoic desire is always present as long as we remain incarnated in this material realm, and is once again attempting to gain the upper hand.

It isn't that Lucifer or egoic mind is the personification of evil as so many religions teach, but is rather the personification of the “Cosmic Magician” who attempts to deceive us into ignorantly believing that the illusions of the material world are real. After all, isn't this how the “Master of Illusions” produces multiplicity of forms to hide the One Formless Truth in an attempt to trick and divert man from Spirit to matter, from Reality to unreality?

These are the times when your free will choice truly matters since you can only serve one Master. Do you serve the Master of the inner Soul voice or the Master of the voice of egoic desire? This is perhaps the most important decision that must be made in a lifetime.

In this community, I am betting most of us choose the true voice knowing that when obedience to that voice becomes automatic and spontaneous, it ripens into surrender. It may start with the slave's will becoming fully aligned with the Master's will. However, if the Master's will is aligned with Divine Master's will, than ultimately both slave and Master, by practicing the protocol of obedience, are returned Home to that Heaven Consciousness of Oneness that lies beyond even while still incarnate in physical form.

Paramahansa Yogananda said that the greatest accomplishment in life is to follow the will of God rather than one's individual will.

Now while this may sound simple, I don't want to give the impression that it is always an easy journey. It isn't. And, it certainly isn't the road for wimps or, in the words of the Velveteen Rabbit's Skin Horse, those who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept.

It is the archetypal Hero's Journey consisting of the departure, the initiation and the return. During the initiation, many fearful inner demons and monsters must be directly faced. Don't these dark, shadowy figures often show up in some of our most intense and cathartic scenes as well as during the most challenging times in our D/s and M/s relationships?

But with the courage to face each monster, trust is deepened, obedience is strengthened, wholeness is reclaimed and ultimate surrender is ensured until what lies beyond, or Home, is reached.

This allows the radiance of a luminosity from the core of our very Being. This luminosity is not a naïve smiley faced sunshine but, to use Thomas Moore's term, a "dark luminosity" accessed from knowing the depths of the whale's belly or the willingness to have played and intimately danced in the most remote recesses of our own shadow which then, like a dark womb, can ultimately birth and grow us into our true destiny and fate.

We come to realize that we can never find changeless, immortal happiness in the mortal, ever-changing, material realm of earth, air, fire and water. We realize that we must not build the mansion of our happiness upon the shifting quicksand of material existence.

As confidence and deep knowingness increases, each heroic Dorothy finally understands that she ALWAYS had the ability to click her heels together and return home.

Home is always within reach, simply waiting for us to wake up and realize that **what lies beyond is already here**. Our obedience to the voice of Christ Consciousness or Buddha Nature or Divine Intuition destroys the illusions of Maya, the illusions of the material world, the illusions that egoic desires will bring fulfillment, and allows us to consciously come home to the Divine Nature that we have always been.

In the words of T.S. Elliot:

And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

So, what happens next, after we return Home to what lies beyond. Is that the end of our Hero's story?

Not too fast! We are now living in the Age of Aquarius. Once the waters of Truth are discovered, the Water Bearer is tasked with pouring out that water so all who are parched can have their thirst quenched.

This is also the metaphysical symbol of the cross. As we reach up vertically for higher Wisdom we are then called to share that wisdom horizontally with our brothers and sisters.

This means we live in an Age that stresses the importance of Service to humanity. And, as a community, doesn't Service come quite naturally to us as a gift of our "wiring"?

But how come "this" sort of Service is so important?

Well, when you find what lies beyond, you realize that you are not simply your brother's keeper, you realize that you ARE your brother and there is no separation. This is what it really means to love your neighbor as yourself, not as much as yourself, but as yourself or the same as yourself.

Beyond this illusion of separation, is the Truth of Oneness at the core of all spiritual traditions. And, with this higher wisdom comes greater responsibility.

This greater responsibility is not about proselytizing, converting or even necessarily teaching. It is about living and modeling the wisdom given you and becoming a fully incarnated embodiment of that Transcendent Truth that has been revealed to and through you.

In other words, let's forget about having "out of body" experiences and be willing to have full "in the body" experiences. Let's incarnate fully into these physical/mental/emotional forms while continuing to remember ourselves as Immortal Soul. Let's fully enjoy our erotic fetishes while remaining always in awe of the higher purpose to which they point us.

Then, the more you simply BE who you truly and already are, the more you let yourself shine, the more your brother sees a reflection of his own true Heart through you and your Service becomes automatic with no "I" that needs to "try" to serve.

It seems to me kind of like an all or none thing. As each of us awakens to what seems to lie beyond but is really already here, we lift every "body" with whom we have contact. That is how all matter is ultimately redeemed, a more accurate meaning, in this slave's humble opinion, of what is meant by being "saved".

A point will arrive in our evolution as a species where every Soul, every spark of the Divine Flame every ray of the Divine Sun, every wave of the Divine Ocean returns home to Source.

What then?

Well, that can be a topic for another keynote at another time.

But what I'd like to leave you with today, are words from the Introduction to A Course in Miracles.

It reads:

"This is a course in miracles. It is a required course. Only the time you take it is voluntary. Free will does not mean that you can establish the curriculum. It means only that you can elect what you want to take at any given time."

Isn't the ultimate curriculum we are each to learn in this lifetime about freeing ourselves from identification with matter or material consciousness?

Freeing ourselves from western culture's celebration of success, power and the forces of greed and ignorance that are destroying the planet?

Freeing ourselves from the limitations of only five senses that cause us to “imagine” that we are separate?

Freeing ourselves from the world of duality?

Freeing ourselves from body identification and instead shifting to Spirit identification so we can consciously return to Unity with Spirit?

Freeing ourselves from the mistaken belief that Heaven is a place rather than a deep awareness of our true Oneness?

For me, true freedom is the ability to continually rest in the peace and perfection of our Being while fully meeting and facing everything that appears in life.

Most folks choose lifetimes of satisfying all of the mind’s desires searching for happiness before discovering that the things of the world will ultimately not provide the fulfillment they seek.

Some folks prefer not to procrastinate and, by some mysterious Grace, get to discover what lies beyond during this lifetime.

In this slave’s humble opinion, we in this community, **not despite our kink but because of our kink**, have been given some extra help or tutoring, some special gifts that are meant to accelerate our progress here in earth school, helping us to not only complete the required curriculum but calling us to support others in graduating to the discovery of what lies beyond.

We share the possibility, in my Teacher’s words, of discovering what is always present, discovering what doesn’t change in the midst of a changing world.

Emotions of all kinds come and go, thoughts of all kinds come and go, life situations of all kinds come and go. But we can discover what is always Still, always at Peace and always here, what is continually present and unchanging through all that changes.

This is the Home or the “transformed consciousness” that lies beyond that we are meant to discover in this lifetime.

And, remember, we don’t have to be some special Saint or Savior or Avatar to realize what lies beyond. Too often, we tend to place our Teachers on such high pedestals, that they cease to be role models and instead represent the “impossible dream” that we find unattainable for ourselves. It is a way we excuse ourselves from having to live up to our greatest possibilities.

How much better to see the simple humanity in our Teachers, to recognize how they are “just like us” thereby making what is possible for them, possible for us. This does not

diminish the esteem with which we hold them but rather dissolves the illusion that they are separate and different from us.

After all, the Wizard of Oz was just an aging, balding guy hiding behind a curtain not so dissimilar from many of us. What we can emulate is the Wizard's ability to help others find a deeper mind, a truer heart and the courage to use them to discover their way back Home to what lies beyond.

This, I believe, is the greater calling that lies beyond for THIS KINK community and the hope for our human family--- to move from conditional love to love without conditions by first individually discovering or realizing Home and then to consciously welcome, celebrate and Bless all Beings Home!

Thank you so much for your attention this morning.

Peace & Blessings to Y/you all.

Presented January 24, 2010 at Southwest Leather Conference.