

Excerpt from:

Drunk with Wonder: Awakening to the God within

By Steve Ryals

(For inclusion on the Atlas Books site)

Introduction

Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves,
the tides and gravity, we shall harness the
energy
of love, and then, for the second time in the
history of the world, man will discover fire.

– *Teilhard de Chardin*

My shooting buddy Richard expertly speared my flesh. After a well-practiced ballet of pulling the plunger back and loosening the rubber hose around my upper arm, blood spurted up into the solution of water and pure crystal methedrine. Then, with a gentle push on the plunger, Richard flushed the mix of blood and drugs into my body.

As the rush built I began to gasp, knowing I had only seconds to lurch into a standing position and stumble into my room. I fell onto the unmade bed, indifferent to the peeling wallpaper and a grimy window that framed the ruined yard. I noticed my unattended cigarette burning in the ashtray, smoke curling lazily into the thick air. As much as I wanted a drag, I couldn't muster the strength to reach for it.

As the speed pulsed through my veins, my vision narrowed as if I had slipped into a tunnel. My heart thundered in my ears, easily beating 200 times a minute, and every cell in my body began screaming in rough ecstasy.

A calm, gentle voice spoke into the chaos of my senses. “So, did you get enough this time?” I feebly craned my neck to see who was speaking, but I was alone. Then I realized that this must be the same inner voice who had been speaking more and more lately, especially when I was peaking on LSD or over-amped on meth.

“What’s it to you?” My thoughts seemed dull, uncaring. “Maybe I’ll die this time, and you can go bother someone else, someone who gives a damn.” The voice fell silent, and my body shuddered as the effects of the speed reached their peak.

“Holy shit,” a familiar voice boomed through the fog. “It stinks in here!” I groaned inwardly. Damn it all, that stupid, nagging voice is back. What was I going to have to do to get it to shut up?

“Steve! Hey man, are you OK?”

With a supreme effort, I peeled my eyes open to see an indistinct figure looming over me. Slowly, like a cartoon running at half speed, Carl’s face fluttered into place. Carl had been one of my best friends for the past couple of years, but since I had fallen into the rabbit hole of shooting speed I hadn’t seen much of him.

“You look terrible!” His face reddened with each word. “What the hell are you doing to yourself?” Carl’s voice, all jagged edges and razor wire, cut little notches through the speed, and I vaguely remembered something about him coming out for a visit. His disgust made me feel like scuttling off into a black hole.

Incandescent shame seared my soul as I tasted myself through his eyes.

Without warning, strong hands gripped my face and forced my mouth open. A familiar pill crawled down my throat. "OK, Steve, you always loved acid. Here's an eight-way purple Owsley. It'll either kill you or cure you. Right now, I don't much care which." With that, Carl stomped out of my room and slammed the door. His raging contempt felt like hot pokers blistering my heart.

He doesn't care either, I thought as my eyelids sagged. No one cares. Dimly, I realized how maudlin that sounded, self-disgust welling up like tears. I managed a weak snort. Even I don't give a rat shit, I concluded, allowing the speed to carry me away. I'd already forgotten about Carl and the LSD. "I care."

That voice again! I began mulling over ways to shut it up for good, but before I got very far the acid, enthusiastically helped along by the speed, tore like a tornado through my awareness. My consciousness, such as it was, began drifting out of my body, eventually bumping along the ceiling like a helium balloon. This is a trip, I thought with a giggle. I'm having an out-of-body experience. I wondered if this meant I was about to die, and I realized that I couldn't find any place in me that seemed to care.

"Look at yourself," the quiet, calm voice suggested. Indifferently, I rolled the balloon of my consciousness over so I could look down. Shock shuddered through me like an earthquake. Could that really be me? Emaciated, grubby, smelly, pale as a moonlit night, I wondered through a growing sense of panic if I was already dead.

"Not quite," the voice replied, as if on cue. "But if you shoot that much speed again any time soon, you will be."

Staring down at my limp body, breath shallow, heart racing, I realized the voice was right. I had been trying to kill myself for months, and here was my chance. One more hit would do it. At that moment, staring over the abyss, I realized I had a choice. Live, or die?

This all happened a long time ago, in April of 1968. Obviously, I chose life, at least of a sort. As soon as I came down, I called my parents and asked to come home. Only 18 at the time, I never shot speed, or anything else, again. Three weeks later, on May 1, Carl died in a motorcycle accident, the victim of a drunk driver. I said for years that Carl saved my life, but what he really did was give me an opportunity to see that I had a choice. And choice is what this book, *Drunk with Wonder: Awakening to the God Within*, is all about.

It's been 15 years since my higher self again made its presence known to me. It was only then that I could begin fully to appreciate Sir Eddington's famous comment, "Not only is the universe stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we *can* imagine."

My name is Steve Ryals, and this book is about how I awakened to my Divinity, and about how you can awaken to your Divinity as well. I've spent a lifetime developing and honing this material, as well as integrating my headstrong inner child with the vast wisdom of my higher self. I am both honored and humbled to have the opportunity to share this perspective with you.

Drunk with Wonder looks at science, spirituality, intentionality and the importance of transformative practices in creating the world of our dreams. We see the apparently disparate realms of science and spirituality as two sides of the same coin. Using tools available in each of these realms, we will actually pick up the

“coin” of reality and examine it from a fresh perspective. We will also take a close look at discernment, which we define as, “the act or process of exhibiting keen insight and good judgment”; and intuition, which is “the act or faculty of knowing or sensing without the use of rational processes, or immediate cognition.”

You will find numerous transformative practices throughout the book. When used consistently, these processes will expand and enhance your ability to experience the present moment with joy and serenity, ecstasy and stillness, passionately alive yet unattached to the outcome. You will see that paradox lies at the heart of all experience, and we will thoroughly explore the fascinating dance of life as we journey together on an inner voyage of discovery.

Please understand from the outset that you are Divinity personified. If you happen to be skeptical about the idea that you are indeed Divine, this material may make you uncomfortable, at least at first. I ask that you suspend judgment for now. I will clearly define what I mean by Divinity early on, and trust that your higher self will respond in a way that works for you. As I will remind you throughout the book, you cannot do this awakening wrong. After all, you are God in form!

Drunk with Wonder also explores the idea that God manifests throughout all of creation, from galactic clusters to amoeba, from black holes to a brilliant sunrise. For now, just consider the possibility that God does not make mistakes – ever! You are not merely a reflection of God, but literally God made manifest.

Before we get into the book, I want to share with you some details about my life. I was born in 1949, and grew up in the placid 50s and wild 60s. In many ways, I was an archetypal child of that time, raised in accordance with the conventional standards of that

era. Though my parents loved me and did the best they could raising my four younger brothers and me, the truth is they had their own issues, which they unintentionally passed on to us.

For me, childhood was filled with feelings of profound loneliness and unworthiness. I soon came to accept the belief that I was not enough, and could never measure up to my father's seemingly impossible standards. By 1967, I had run away from home and was living in a crash pad in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. I did everything I could to hide from my insecurities in a world filled with sex, drugs, and rock n' roll. It was the "Summer of Love," and though I claimed that banner for myself, paradoxically I often felt lost in suicidal despair.

Years later, after many adventures as well as traumatic losses, I decided something had to change. While still a hippie at heart, I resolved that, in the interest of self-preservation, I would attempt to conform to my parent's (and society's) expectations. I got a degree, got married, then divorced, got a haircut, then a job, got married again, started businesses, made money, lost money and got divorced again. In addition, I continually did my best to keep from feeling anything by submerging myself in alcohol, drugs, TV and always staying busy. Sound familiar?

Over time, I realized that in spite of my best attempts to stay numb, I had spent most of my life desperately seeking answers to questions that terrified me. Questions such as, "Why do I feel so separate and alone? Why don't I ever feel as though I'm enough? What's the meaning of my life? Why am I even here?" And perhaps the most puzzling questions of all: "What is life all about? What's the point?"

In the absence of answers, I became a master at avoiding the questions. Whenever I dared to consider one of them, all I found

was pain and confusion. Over and over again, in my futile efforts to avoid these questions and the scary feelings they engendered, I nearly destroyed myself. Shortly after Carl's death, I started using alcohol, and soon learned about its amazing power to numb the soul. Alcohol soon became my favorite substance to abuse, and I battled it, mostly unsuccessfully, for the next 33 years.

This cycle of pain and self-abuse finally began to change when I became reacquainted with my higher self.

In 1991 I paid a visit to Marilyn Gordon,¹ a friend and hypnotherapist I trusted. I thought that she might be able to help me understand an amazing dream I'd recently had. As Marilyn brought me into a hypnotic trance for the first time, she felt prompted to ask a question that had nothing to do with my ostensible reason for being there. She asked whether there was anyone who wanted to speak. A wise, calm voice immediately replied, saying simply, "Why, I'm your higher self. Who did you think it would be?" It turned out to be the same voice that had spoken to me all those years ago during the chaos of my drug abuse.

Marilyn and my higher self proceeded to have the first of many conversations, which eventually ranged from the nature of the self to the nature of reality. Being in a deep hypnotic state at the time, I had no idea that this exchange was happening. When I came out of the trance Marilyn played the cassette of the session back to me. I was dumbfounded, to say the least, and more than a little frightened. It took some time before it began to sink in that my life was about to irrevocably change.

There were many more of these sessions over the next several months. In one of them, my higher self said that I was his eyes and ears in this life; the vehicle, as he affectionately calls me, through which he would share his gentle wisdom with the world.

Years went by before I finally began to understand the larger truth that my higher self is nothing less than who I really am, and ultimately a reflection of who we *all* really are. I've spent the past 15 years integrating with my higher self, and *Drunk with Wonder* is our gift to the world.

With my higher self's endlessly patient help, I have learned to see the light of Divine Presence shining in the eyes of every living being. I have come to realize that who we really are is the moment-by-moment manifestation of this light.

It's become quite clear that many of us, including myself, spend most of our lives lost in "Fear-Based-Consciousness," agonizing over the past and worrying about the future. Is it really any wonder, then, that we feel emotionally and physically exhausted so much of the time?

Becoming familiar with my higher self's great wisdom and profound truth has completely changed my life. After decades of alcohol and drug abuse, I am now sober, and I am pleased to say that I routinely experience a level of peace and serenity that for many years I would not have believed possible. I do not mean to imply that I have transcended my humanity, but rather that I have embraced it.

Though from time to time I still deal with my deepest stories of not being good enough (along with the panoply of intense emotions they engender), on a day-to-day basis my life is filled with passion, purpose and play. I know that I'm making a difference in the world, and that's what matters most. It's not just my dream, but my unshakable conviction, that making a positive contribution to the world we leave for our children and grandchildren is absolutely vital. It is only by our coming together as a global community that

we will create a world where every child, and indeed every one of us, feels safe, loved and celebrated.

Many people have asked me what it feels like to embrace my higher self. Being as real as I can be in this moment, I will say that sometimes it's a mixed bag. While the experience itself is filled with calm euphoria and numinous peace, many times I thought I was going off the deep end, and that the folks in the white coats were going to burst in at any moment and take me away. It has taken a long time for me to fully own that I am as worthy as any other to experience my higher self. One of my goals in writing this book is to make it just a little easier for others to be able to embrace their higher selves than it was for me.

And so it goes. Please understand that, at one time or another, I have struggled with virtually all of the subjects we discuss in this book. As the years have gone by, I've come to trust this inner wisdom. While my higher self never makes me wrong for my choices, if I specifically ask, he will cheerfully point out consequences and perspectives I hadn't thought of. As he repeatedly says, "The greatest gift we could possibly give you would be to reflect the truth of who you really are, which is nothing less than God incarnate." Or, as Valentine Michael Smith famously stated in Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, "Thou art God."

It's my fervent hope that, as you get to know "us" through the pages of this book, you will open to the Divine Presence of your higher self. While you may or may not experience that presence as a distinct voice, I know that simply by moving your own thoughts to the side and inviting the omnipresent light to shine through you, new and amazing possibilities will become manifest.

I want to emphasize that my higher self speaks mostly in the plural, using the terms we, or us. It also uses pronouns such as

him and her interchangeably, teaching that at the core of our individuality lies One Heart, One Spirit, and that this Spirit is not gender-based. Numerous terms, including Spirit, Creator, God, God/Goddess and Divine Presence, are tantamount to the same essential truth, that the Great Mystery contains within Itself all those concepts and much, much more. The deepest truth, which I will repeat often in this book, is that there is only One of Us here, only One Heart, of which we are all infinitely precious sparks.

One note on formatting: the questions in *italics* represent life stages I went through earlier, while the terms we, us and our represent my integrated higher self. I created many of these questions by looking through my journals, so please understand that they are my attempt to reflect my initial reactions when I first confronted these questions.

As you read, I suggest that you write down any questions you may have. If they remain unanswered through the course of the book, you may submit them to me at questions@drunkwithwonder.com. I do ask that you hold off on emailing questions until you are finished with the book, as I'm going to cover a lot of ground and answers may arise during our time together. You see, one of the purposes of this book is to help you learn how to listen, *really* listen, to the still, small voice inside of you. This voice awaits your attention. It holds the highest wisdom to every question in your life. Here, always available in your heart, lies the sweet mystery of your very own higher self.

Some final notes: where applicable, I have included relevant notes for those of you who are so inclined to explore these subjects in greater depth. Please turn to the back of the book for an index, an extensive bibliography, recommended reading list, a list of

publications with which I stay current as well as additional resources.

The poetry, all of which I have written over the past 15 years, is meant to illustrate various feelings I've had during this journey.

And now, I warmly welcome you to *Drunk with Wonder*.