

QI HEALS

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HOW DIVINE! A QI PERSPECTIVE

Those who are occupied in the restoration of health of others, by the joint exertion of skill and humanity, are above all the great of the earth. They can even partake of divinity, since to preserve and renew is almost as noble as to create.

Voltaire 1776

What has always piqued my interest about this quotation is the phrase *restoration of health*. Voltaire links the word with the infinitives *to preserve and (to) renew*. Preservation and renewal of what? Of health only, or are there more expansive implications?

It is also intriguing that he insists that the exertion of humanity will make one divine. We do not need a spark of divinity within us to be divine. We need to use to the utmost the humanity we are born with. On the surface, this is a little like Blake's *if a fool persists in his folly/he will become wise*, meaning to use to the utmost what you are given. The difference is that, in Blake's world, there are many fools, and they do not persist in their folly because they are fools; whereas in Voltaire's world, there are few people exerting humanity to restore health. Today I will consider how these ideas are relevant to my work.

The Japanese greeting for 'how are you?' is *genki desu ka*. *Genki* (元気) means 'pristine ki (qi)' or 'the ki you are born with'. The deeper meaning of the greeting is thus: 'is your qi today the qi you were born with?', 'do you have your original qi?'.

Genki is more than just health. It is a state of vigor, verve, and well-being. An athlete who performs poorly is not genki, and an athlete who performs well is very genki. Waking up with a sense of optimism and a wish to go out and meet the day is genki. Wanting to lie in bed and let the day pass without you is not.

My feeling about *genki* is that we are born with a transparent qi that is all-inclusive. Over the years, our qi becomes less and less transparent, and more and more translucent, finally becoming opaque as we acquire layer upon layer of, well, Life. This has the effect of numbing or dulling our senses and our health. The ideal of Zen Buddhism is to return the qi to its original transparency by means of *zazen* (Zen meditation) culminating in *satori*. The ineffable insight of *satori* (enlightenment) renews and preserves the qi we were born with. It is the quintessential mind/body experience.

We have no idea how a newborn or infant really sees the world. The lens of the newborn's eye is perfectly clear. Scientists speculate that newborns perceive the world in intensities of brightness; all that they behold is luminous. By the time we are old enough to remember our first sights, we have already lost the purity of our lenses. The colors around us that we perceive as "normal" are actually different from what we would see with a pristine lens. Our perception has become clouded over. Hence Blake's assertion that "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite." We need to restore and renew our vision. The successful Zen practitioner has perfectly clear doors of perception.

Which brings us to our 'original qi'. Qi is universal. All living things possess it. Qi is also specific in so far as each of us has his/her own. According to Noguchi, the founder of the *Seitai* Association, our individual qi comes from the way each of us meets gravity. Our bodies can move in ten different ways: up, down, forward, backward, left, right, twist left, twist right, open, close. We are born with a certain bias toward one of these movements, and this bias is directly responsible for our personalities and behaviors. He was in agreement with Freud who wrote *anatomy is destiny*. Noguchi provided details as to why this is so. The way your feet meet the ground determines how your body weight is distributed. Check the soles of ten

people's shoes to see the differences in distribution of body weight. Your relationship with gravity and this effect on your total movement is what creates bias, and accounts for the type of qi you have and how you use it.

Noguchi called this bias *taiheki* (体癖), and designated ten types and two sub-types. *Taiheki* literally means 'body habits'. It was Noguchi's strong contention that *taiheki* is unchanging and unchangeable. The way *taiheki* shapes your qi is what makes you *you*. It accounts for personality traits and characteristic behavior. (Noguchi had a thriving matchmaking practice, evaluating potential couples' compatibility on the basis of their mutual *taiheki*.) Today, there are a number of practitioners who disagree with Noguchi, and believe that a person's *taiheki* can be, if not completely changed, at least modified. There is not one, however, that does not believe in *taiheki* and its influence on qi.

We are created with a certain *taiheki*. We are created with a certain quality of health. You cannot become healthier than you are capable of becoming. You have to play the hand you are dealt. You can be taken from an unhealthy environment to a salubrious one and feel the better for it. Your health quotient has been given the opportunity to fulfill its potential. Still, there is a limit to how healthy, strong, intelligent, and funny you can be. What a good qi practitioner will attempt to do is to restore you to your pristine qi so that you can make new again your life. A good qi treatment will put you in touch with your original qi. If your health, strength, intelligence, and humor are operating at half-speed, the treatment should bring you up to full speed, and give you a renewed sense of optimism about yourself and, well, Life.

Most people come for treatments to get rid of a specific problem, usually pain. This was my case thirty years ago. I was in so much pain that I didn't care if my qi was pure or impure, black or white, or even existed for that matter. Just get me out of pain. It took me a couple of years to figure out that Mrs. Matsuura got me out of pain through qi, and had been trying to restore me to, and then preserve, my original qi in order to accelerate the healing process and make me happy.

A person in pain wants immediate relief. No one comes to see me as a first choice. SIKE Health is, if I estimate conservatively, about the fourteenth stage of the Via Dolorosa to healing. We are the Chapel of Lost Hope. Or maybe Last Hope. First interviews require delicacy and tact to get the information I want. I have to take the measure of the person, try and get a handle on their personality, assess their qi, and relax them before I can really get down to work. If you are a good listener and an incisive questioner, most people will tell you exactly what is wrong with them. It saves wasting time and energy following your own preconceptions of what is 'really' the problem.

I want to know what people were like *before* their pain, so that I can return them to that status. This requires more than a mechanistic approach of adjusting, tweaking, pulling and prodding. It requires an appeal to their humanity through my own. Their qi has become degraded through pain, and has to be renewed just as much as the physical obstacle to a pain-free life has to be removed.

Not everyone comes for pain. Some people say, "I don't feel comfortable in my body." Time to restore their qi. Others say their zest for life is diminished. Time to restore their qi. A few people complain of a diminished sense of taste, and therefore a loss of pleasure with food. Time to restore their qi. And many many people are troubled by poor sleep and/or anxiety. Time to restore their qi.

I may have once or twice saved someone's life. I don't know for sure. I have restored and renewed many people to their true pre-pain, pre-degraded qi selves, through the exertion of skill and humanity. I have often been called a 'lifesaver' for that.

Let me tell you, the feeling is divine.

UNCLE ARNIE (VI)

True to form, Uncle Arnie forgot overnight the details of the previous evening, retaining only a *frisson* of agreeable fear in the readily accessible corner of his memory. To my mother, he summarized the evening: "I love wrasslin'.

There were stupid midgets and big scary guys with beards that I showed what's what. They picked me up, not the guys with beards but some other guys, and threw me around. Them wrasslers is strong cause I ain't small. I love wrasslin'." Uncle Arnie's verbal omissions were more than made up for by the enthusiasm of his recitation. His enthusiasm was such that his tale surpassed my poor powers to add or subtract. Shrugging and smiling enigmatically, I increased the grounds of my mother's suspicion that Uncle Arnie's tale was more fancy than fact.

"What do you mean by stupid midgets, Arnie?" she asked.

He looked at her blankly. "Y'know what's a midget?" he asked. She nodded. "Y'know what's stupid?" he asked, to which she nodded again. "Then you know what's a stupid midget," Uncle Arnie declared, Q.E.D.

The bus ride was never mentioned. Uncle Arnie had not forgotten that, though. I knew he remembered from his clumsy attempts to surprise me in my bath, hoping to collect evidence for a definitive evaluation of the relative size of the stranger's penis.

The rest of Uncle Arnie's stay was, by the standards set by the night at the wrestling match, uneventful. Yet one afternoon was not without interest. My mother's other novel idea for his entertainment --a full day aboard a deep-sea fishing boat-- came to nothing as Uncle Arnie clung limpet-like to a dock piling and refused to board. The tickets were paid for, the other fishermen had boarded, and the jaunty captain and crew waited at the gangway to welcome my uncle and me aboard. There was a mix-up in communications between my mother and uncle, whether over the fishing, the boat, or both, I was never able to ascertain. However, Uncle Arnie had not known he was being shipped off to sea until I attempted to lead him over the gangway. His firm attachment to the dock piling ended that brief chapter in our lives, and the jaunty captain and crew seemed even jauntier to leave us behind.

My mother's plan had appalled me from the start: as deep-sea fishing was a pastime which gave me little pleasure anyway, and as the possibility of Dramamine having little or no effect on Uncle Arnie froze my young blood, I was

content to leave him clinging to the piling and wave adieu to the boat. Taking a leaf from the captain's book, I strode jauntily off the pier. Uncle Arnie unwrapped himself from the piling, and ran behind me gratefully, like a dog that has been reprieved from a certain beating.

My mother had dropped us off at Haulover Pier and sped away to recharge her emotional batteries in the solitude of the empty house. Uncle Arnie and I walked in the direction of home under the intense summer sun. We stopped at a movie theater in Surfside that had a double bill. The first film was the story of a mother and her young son. The mother died and continued to visit her son as an apparition visible and audible only to the child. The rest of the world, overhearing only the child's half of their conversations, decided that the trauma of his mother's death had pushed him to the brink of insanity, and began shunning him. This made him seek his mother's comfort all the more. I found the film disturbing and moving. It had a psychological and emotional edge to it that rubbed against my unconscious fear of losing my mother and having to fend for myself in an unloving world. Had I been alone I might have cried.

The plot of the film was lost on Uncle Arnie who, if he could have, would have stopped the film every few minutes in order to ponder just what was going on. The crux of the problem was that the ghost was not invisible to the cinema audience, merely translucent. And if we could see it, why couldn't the people standing right next to it? Or conversely, if no one on the screen could see it, why should her son be able to see it? Somebody was either nuts or blind or both. Uncle Arnie couldn't decide. There was no on-screen logic, he could not engage his willing suspension of disbelief, and he found the film stupid. Besides, he did not believe in ghosts.

The second film was a modern version of Odysseus and the Cyclops. A group of --wouldn't you know?-- deep-sea fishermen was shipwrecked, and by a miracle reached a paradisiacal island just as their supply of soggy crackers ran out. They would not have been so quick to kiss dry land had they known a sixty-foot tall, mono-optic cannibal was watching them. The one-eyed behemoth

terrified the shipwrecked fishermen, and terrified Uncle Arnie who fled into the foyer, drooling and blubbing. The man who sneered at ghosts had no doubt as to the existence of cyclopes, and wanted to get as far away from them as possible, which meant going neither on foot nor by bus.

I did not want to disturb my mother's well-deserved respite to have her collect us, and so took Uncle Arnie home by taxi. I used precious allowance money to pay the fare. My mother greeted us morosely, and made Uncle Arnie a milkshake to steady his nerves. Then she led him to the family room couch, and turned on the television. She had reached the end of her Uncle Arnie tether. Apart from three hours one afternoon when I walked Uncle Arnie to the beach and sat with him, he was allowed to spend his last three days with us indoors watching television and thumbing through hastily procured comic books. He was content.

My father's disdain for his brother was absolute. He saw Uncle Arnie only at dinner, and even that half hour taxed his patience and stamina. He never questioned his brother on the doings of the day, nor did he care if Uncle Arnie was having a good time. The wrestling episode, a high-water mark in his brother's life, passed unknown to him, unless he heard of it in private from my mother. He asked, without interest, my mother and me what we had done that day in a way that demanded an answer of ten words or less. Chewing his food greedily, and swallowing with gluttonous gusto, Uncle Arnie would nod and smile to our replies. His appreciative enthusiasm did not vary with the day's event, but was uniform and regular. He seemed to enjoy everything in life except buses, deep-sea fishing, cyclopes, and maudlin films about female ghosts.

I could not understand my father's contempt for his brother. Uncle Arnie was usually innocuous, occasionally lovable and ingratiating, and only rarely irritating. (The only time he got on my nerves was during his final three days when he was entertained by comic books he could not read, and so turned often and loudly to me for decipherment.) But I could not believe that my father's antipathy was

unfounded, for I had always thought him intelligent and decent, though with a tendency to avoid the unpleasant. It was more than ten years later that I learned the reason behind Mort's treatment of Uncle Arnie, but ignorant of that reason at the time, I became infected with the suspicion that Uncle Arnie possessed a disagreeable character flaw for which I had better be on the lookout. It was my father's character that merited the scrutiny of a weather eye, but he had removed himself so successfully from the family circle during Uncle Arnie's stay, and I had been thrust so forcibly into the continuous care of Uncle Arnie, that I gave my full attention to the more conspicuous of the two men, and let consideration of my father's behavior slide for more than ten years.

My mother liked Uncle Arnie, though she was not well disposed to him at the start. Like myself, she could not credit my father with unfounded antipathy, and read into his disengagement from family affairs the implication that Uncle Arnie needed special handling. Accordingly, her natural penchant for vacation planning became obsessively meticulous and elaborate as though she had been entrusted with a monumental undertaking such as, say, the construction of a dam.

She, too, harbored suspicions about Uncle Arnie at first, and it took her five days to become convinced that he was as easygoing and unassuming as he seemed. Once convinced, however, she became Uncle Arnie's staunch ally and supporter. She berated my father nightly in the privacy of their bedroom for not taking an interest in his family.

"Why did you invite him if..."

"I didn't invite him, it was my turn to have him."

"But you don't have him. I have him. Why did you allow him to come only to ignore him?"

"He doesn't think he's being ignored. He seems very happy."

"He is very happy. It doesn't take much to make him happy. You should try it."

"Maybe next time."

"There isn't going to be a next time. Not unless you arrange it. Mort, honey, he's family. You shouldn't treat him as if he's less than a stranger. Sure, there's something sad about him, but there's also something dear about him."

Pliant and yielding though he was, Uncle Arnie's very presence demanded that something be done with him daily. What with planning, chauffeuring and cooking during the sultry summer days and, from the second week, rowing nightly with her husband after her day's labors, my mother's energy deserted her, and she was content to see Uncle Arnie watching television.

By the time he left, I no longer found Uncle Arnie freakish or outlandish. He was a man of quite ordinary habits who, to me, lived under a cloud of limited intelligence. On the other hand, I could not accept that he was a full-fledged member of the family, a relation for life who was slated to spend a fortnight with us again in three years. He was just somebody we knew and let into our home briefly, only to cast back into oblivion when his vacation time ran out. He could not write, and Mort would not countenance phoning. We heard about him only if Paul was moved to send us an occasional greeting at Rosh Hashanah.

The morning of Uncle Arnie's departure, Mort gave him a manly handshake in the doorway, and then hurried off to work. My mother and I saw him off at the airport. He had his parrot painting and lots of photos in his blue tote bag to show the stewardesses. The airline had been requested to give him the same seat as before, and to serve him hamburgers. A stewardess held up a bulging Royal Castle bag for my mother to see.

He and I shook hands. My mother kissed him warmly on the mouth. My last memory of him alive is his broad back heaving awkwardly as he climbed through the dense Miami sunlight up the steps to the plane door.

My mother called to him and waved, but he did not hear. She continued waving, and began to cry gently.

I asked, "Will you miss Uncle Arnie?"

She shook her head.

"Does Uncle Arnie make you sad?"

"I'm not sure. I think so. It might be your father who's made me sad today. When I think about it, there's really nothing sad about Arnie. What we think he is, and what he is, well, I don't think they're the same. If I'm sad about him, it's only because I don't know him well enough to think otherwise. Maybe during his next visit we'll find out more about him."

As soon as we returned home my mother put Uncle Arnie's vacation clothes in a carton which she later posted to Louis in California. He was slated to play host to Uncle Arnie the following year.

With the last vestige of Uncle Arnie gone --he had been given all the vacation photos and negatives; we kept none-- Mort returned to the family fold, and life returned to its pristine pace.

Two years later my parents divorced. Uncle Arnie lost his Miami vacation retreat. Neither my mother nor I ever met him again.

No, I never met Uncle Arnie again. However, I saw him once. At least, I think I saw him.

I was seventeen, living abroad, working as a shepherd.

Three hundred ewes were kept for breeding and milking in a large enclosure divided into two pens, indoor and outdoor. A four-foot high cinderblock wall separated the two pens. The roof covering the indoor pen was high enough that a tall man could stand on the wall and not hit his head. The wall did more than divide inside from outside; it acted as a barrier between the forces of darkness and light. Half of the top of the wall was always dark and cold, the other half, warm and illuminated. The starkness of the optical effect fascinated everyone who saw it.

Indoors the sheep stood subdued; blurred grey ghosts with nowhere to go. The clotted, fetid air and turbid light created an impression of stagnation. Movements seemed slow and labored, sound was muffled, smells were intensified. Only under the hot harsh electric lights strung over the milking pit

did movement become recognizably natural, but even there the stench of ordure and rotting straw prevailed.

Outside were sunlight and the scent of fine red dust and green pines. A living breeze always blew from the north, keeping the stench of the indoor pen at bay behind the cinderblock wall. Outdoors, life was large and robust, activity proceeded at a natural pace; both the sheep and the shepherds longed for the back pen. Mercifully, the sheep were, for the most part, left outdoors. They were brought in briefly twice a day for milking, at early morning and early evening. They were forced to remain indoors for long stretches only during the birthing and shearing seasons.

I saw Uncle Arnie in the spring, the birthing season.

Lambs were born indoors, and within four days of the first birth, the murky indoor gloom was relieved by balls of softly glowing whiteness dotting the perimeter of the pen. It was like flying over a wasteland at night and seeing faint scattered lights down below intimating the warmth and cheer of life. The dull lowing of bored mothers and mothers-to-be gave way to the high-pitched staccato chirps of hungry babies. It was the one time of year when being cloistered indoors was, to the shepherds, bearable.

During the first week of birthing, my two workmates and I had hardly a moment's rest. Most births occurred with the precision of cars rolling off an assembly line: a groan from the mother as labor pains set in, a grimace, a stomach contraction, and one or two lambs slide headfirst down the birth canal and out into the world of milking machines and mutton.

We were present at every birth to record lineage for breeding purposes, to tag the lambs for identification, and in case of difficulty during delivery. After birth we would guide the half-blind lamb to its mother's udders and make sure it drank. (Sometimes the problem was with the lamb; it could not find the teat or did not have sufficient strength to suck the milk out. Sometimes the problem was an absence of maternal feelings; having delivered herself of her burden, some ewes wanted nothing to do with their offspring, and would kick at

newborns that tried to drink from them.) Finally, mother and child --or children-- would be placed in a small private enclosure within the indoor pen until the lambs were strong enough to survive the push and shove of life in the outdoor pen, usually after two or three days.

As all the ewes had been impregnated (by rams, the old-fashioned, time-consuming, consummately interesting way) within three days, all but a very few of the three hundred expectant mothers had delivered at the end of ten days from the start of the birthing season. It was no longer necessary for the three of us to be on duty at all times, and we spelled each other in three-hour shifts. It was during one of my three-hour vigils that Uncle Arnie returned fleetingly into my life.

Two and a half hours of my stint had passed without incident, and I was bored. I sat on a hard wooden bench with my elbows resting on a trestle table, staring into the gloomy void of the indoor pen, waiting for a cry or a groan. Most of the lambs had been set loose outdoors to play in the sunlight where I could not see them. With them gone, the darkness indoors was complete, as was the stillness. I felt old and tired, overworked and unrewarded; I wanted to be rid of the indoor pen.

I made a thin cup of instant coffee, and took it to the wall to look at the newborn lambs at play. Lambs leap and bound for no apparent reason. They seem to be drawing such intensity of life from the earth that they frequently have to leap off their feet in order not to be singed by the heat of their earth-induced feelings. It is a sad thing to see lambs age and grow until they become earthbound and conventional, and leap only out of fright. But at that moment, I no longer felt unrewarded. My two weeks of grueling work had been a rite of passage culminating in a seat at the best table in the house for viewing Nature's floorshow, the joy of living. Watching the lambs, even the coffee tasted better.

A ewe groaned. The sound reverberated eerily in the stillness under the corrugated iron roof, and it was almost a minute before I located her. I left my coffee on the wall and went to her. She had gone into labor and seemed to be

experiencing unusual pain and difficulty. She would not lie still, but rolled over the damp earthen floor. She groaned constantly, and the sound thudded against the thick, vaporous air above us and expanded like a mushroom cloud. Other ewes groaned back in sympathy, and the air began to tremble with the vibrations. I squatted beside the ewe and stroked her head gently and rhythmically. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, gave a high-pitched cry, and squeezed out a wet, white lamb followed by a balloon-like sac of amniotic fluid that burst on the straw. The mother, exhausted by her effort, lay her head down and breathed heavily, but soon rose to lick her child dry and drink the fluid from off the straw. The lamb tried to stand, wobbled and fell, and was content to be licked. Its legs shivered and its head twitched. I recorded the birth and tagged the lamb's ear. It derived no pleasure from my attention. I retrieved my cup of coffee, and toasted mother and child. I never imagined sheep shed coffee could taste so wonderful.

Fifteen minutes later the lamb was on shaky feet and had opened its eyes. They were bleary and unfocussed. The wool lay on its bony back in tight ringlets. It bleated to be fed. The mother positioned her udders before the lamb's face. The baby seemed momentarily hypnotized by the swaying udders, but regained consciousness and seized a teat with its mouth. As it began to suck, the ewe groaned and fell to the ground. She had again gone into labor. Multiple births are common and usually follow in quick succession. I had never been present at a delayed second birth. I had been instructed that, in such cases, it is vital to shove the hand into the womb to ascertain the lamb's position. If it is directed the wrong way, there is a strong likelihood that the legs are impeding passage out of the womb and birth canal.

I rolled up my sleeve and shoved my arm as far as the elbow up into the ewe. The lamb was positioned the wrong way; it was backing out of the womb, its forelegs extended, obstructing exit. I had to push it back completely into the womb where there was space, fold the legs under the body, turn the lamb around, and then yank it out.

The space was narrow, my hand was large and inexperienced, the lamb was slippery. I couldn't turn it. The ewe craned her neck around to look at me. I tried to look confident. She stared bleakly, knowing that I was wrong for the job. She was without fear, hope or regret. I was just wasting my time and hers. She turned back to stare at the wall in resignation, and sighed, denying me sympathy. I wanted some sort of acknowledgement from her that I had tried.

My universe contracted to a sheep, a fetus, and half an arm, all rooted to a soggy earthen floor enveloped in rank air. My arm was staving off death where life was departing. The ewe groaned, human-like. That groan I knew; I was the wretchedly tired midwife holding Uncle Arnie in Grandma Edna's womb. Life and death were effecting an unacceptable compromise while I strained to defeat their purpose. Uncle Arnie hadn't died. The lamb would not die. I carried on to the end with renewed hope. The ewe shuddered as if jolted, and the lamb turned. I yanked it out of the mother like a conjurer and, seeing it lying peacefully on the ground, I fainted.

I doubt that I was unconscious for more than a minute. The ewe was licking her child, and tremors creased the tiny body. Its elder brother, stumbling about half-blind, tripped over it and fell on top of it. The mother, incensed, knocked the older lamb off its sibling with a golf swing of the head. The newborn's legs continued to twitch. The mother devoured the fluid from the lamb and floor. She nudged the lamb with her nose, pushing it several inches over the straw. The lamb's dainty, glistening hooves drew away from the body and quivered. That was the last motion it made.

It took the mother half a minute to realize that her child was dead, and then she began to wail. She touched the crumpled body here and there with her nose as if hoping to hit a spot where the vital spark could flare. She pushed so hard that she rolled the lamb over on its other side. The live child tried to follow the swaying udders, walking like a palsied marionette. When its head collided with the udders, the distraught mother kicked it away with her hind leg. It lay down in a corner, the safest thing to do. Finally the mother collapsed in frustration

and exhaustion. She laid her head on the dead child, infusing heat where there was none. She said nothing and seemed not to be breathing. Her mourning was silent and tragic.

I sat beside the mother and child, trying to will myself into the wholesome numbness of enervation, but couldn't. My head throbbed. My chest was constricted, my rib cage impinged on my heart, causing me pain. Breathing was an effort. My legs felt boneless, and my bloody, sticky arm tingled morbidly.

I climbed the cinderblock wall and sat straddling it. The right side of me was warm with sunlight and through my right ear I heard healthy lambs butting heads and bleating gleefully. My left side was cold with darkness, and my left ear heard only the rueful bleating of a newborn in a corner wanting to be fed. A stark line clove me in half, and I neither wanted to face the brightness where hundreds of lambs thrived in Blakeian ecstasy, nor did I want to look into grief-stricken blackness. I did not want any responsibility, least of all for my own actions. If I could be told what to see, what to eat, how to live, whom to love, what a blessing that would be.

I thought, I will go on occupying this eight-inch thickness of wall, half-in half-out of life/death until the wall crumbles; but I am likely to crumble before the wall does; what does this signify?; that I must choose light or darkness, active or passive, life or death? If so, I choose the light. From that trite thought a sweeping train of thoughts --impossible to relate, for they were more tantalizing inklings than complete thoughts-- passed out of my body upwards through the roof of the sheep shed, drawing me with them to an unimaginable height of glorious brightness and purity from which place the visual distinction of life and death was no longer visible. The two were not the same, yet they were undivided, and I was wonderfully relieved to see this. Their mutual purpose and function were so integrated that choosing one or the other became unnecessary. One just swallowed both whole.

At the same time, I felt like a fool for never having seen this before, and wondered how I could have been so unaware of what was simple and obvious. I

was overtaken by a rapturous desire to see more, and looked about me. All was clean and dazzling. In the distance I saw a solitary figure striding manfully through the brightness. He was tall, his eyes were fiercely dark and intelligent, his shoulders were powerfully set. No man had ever been better or more beautifully proportioned. No man ever seemed more assured.

As he approached I recognized him as Uncle Arnie. I was certain it was my uncle. He looked nothing whatsoever like the uncle I had met, but I would have undergone torture to demonstrate my conviction that I was looking at Arnold Balsom. He walked purposefully, looking straight ahead as if hastening forward on a mission. His expression was warm and wise. He clove the bright ether leaving a shimmering wake. I followed in his wake, hoping to catch him and tell him how glad I was to have been transported to this realm of clarity. I 'knew' that if my Uncle Arnie turned to me and said even a single word that my experience would be confirmed, and I could carry the keen sensation of my vision with me as something more than an airy memory. I was gaining on him. I tried calling, but no sounds came. I raised my hand to wave, sure that he would feel the vibrations pulsing through the ether, and turn to speak to me. Perhaps I could even tap his shoulder. I put out my hand, and was pulled off the wall by hands tugging at my trouser leg. My workmates had returned to spell me, and were furious.

One of them said, "What the hell's going on? There's a dead lamb and an ailing mother here, and you're sitting on the wall with a stupid smile on your face waving at nothing."

I have never been able to recapture that vision. Often, like Caliban, that rough-hewn, sweet-souled creature, I cried to dream again.

USEFUL HEALTH HINT

To remove warts, soak a cotton ball in castor oil, and tape it over the wart each night before bed. Remove in the morning. You may want to tape something over the

tape to keep the bedclothes clean. You can wear light gloves or socks if the wart is on the hand or foot. The wart should go away within six weeks. For verrucas (plantar warts), use salicylic acid or nail polish. Daily application of salicylic acid takes about 4 weeks. I am told that nail polish takes about a week, as the wart is starved of oxygen and falls off. However, this is anecdotal and I cannot vouch for it firsthand.