

The Language of the Soul

🕒 August 27, 2015 📁 Uncategorized

We humans are so much more than flesh and blood, brain matter and memory. We are more than physical and mental beings. Not only is this my belief, but it is my identity as a person of faith. I have witnessed things that I cannot explain, which also suggests to me that there is more to us than gray matter, electrical impulses, and chemical reactions.



beauty girl cry

I have experienced worship with the cognitively impaired and have felt a distinct presence that I could not explain. However, I tend to be a cynic and skeptic, so I have looked for a logical explanation for those experiences. Still, they remain a mystery. I tend to take the experiences and claims of others with a grain of salt too. I was intrigued, however, by Dr. Eben Alexander's book, *A Proof of Heaven*, in which he detailed an encounter with an angelic being during a seven-day coma following an illness. Dr. Alexander is a neurosurgeon, who had been skeptical of such near-death experiences.

I prefer the logical and coldly rational explanations about chemicals that rush through the brains of extreme sports athletes. Steven Kotler, in his book *The Rise of Superman*, links the experiences of athletes at peak performance ("flow") to the creative experiences of artists and the religious ecstasy of the mystics.

How do I bridge these two sides of myself: the logical, rational side and the emotional, intuitive side? How do we answer the question, "Where does the psyche end and the soul begin, and where does the soul end and the psyche begin?" Great minds continue to probe this same question, not only from a religious standpoint, but from a scientific perspective as well. One of the greatest thinkers in the field of psychology, Carl Jung, devoted his life's work to this question. Two excellent books about his quest are *Boundaries of the Soul: The Practice of Jung's Psychology* by Dr. June Singer and *Jung's Map of the Soul: An Introduction* by Murray Stein.

Rather than engage in a highly speculative endeavor to demonstrate or prove the existence of the soul, I believe it is more useful to believe what I have experienced and to share it with others. I believe the soul has a very different way of expressing itself. The soul must express itself in partnership with the rest of who we are.

I believe that music is one language of the soul. I have seen people react with both tears and laughter when music is played or sung. Music calls from beyond time and memory to something deep within us. Those who can no longer hear the music can feel the vibrations and be moved by them.

Laughter and tears are another language of the soul. Sociologists tell us that laughter and tears are universal to all human cultures, but are unique to humans. What causes us to laugh or cry? Some people cry when they are hurt. Others become so happy that they cry. Laughter is a response to a sudden release of tension, as any good standup artist will attest. Tears flow as the result of being overwhelmed by the enormity of something, sorrow or joy.

Tears and laughter are interrelated as well. I have often laughed so hard that I have cried. I have also been so deeply upset and sad that I have started to laugh. Both experiences have a cleansing effect. Our tears and laughter connect us to others who are experiencing the same emotions. Tears and laughter serve the same purpose that language serves. When we share laughter and tears, I believe we connect to the spiritual realm and even to the realm of God, not just with one another.

The Bible lost some of its original language in translation, but still it witnesses to both humor and suffering as the language of the soul. When we read the Bible, we may overlook the humor. Elton Trueblood, in *The Humor of Christ*, points out the Bible not only records Jesus making his disciples laugh hysterically (even if it is lost in translation), but also his biting satire directed toward his adversaries.

It is our belief as Christians that Jesus' purpose was to enter into our suffering. Christ experienced physical suffering on the cross and the spiritual suffering of rejection by his own people and inner circle of friends.

The language of joy and suffering is what I believe I experienced with the memory-impaired residents I served as a chaplain. It connected me to them, even when language was either unavailable or failed us. We were able to share both joy and suffering. There was plenty of both.



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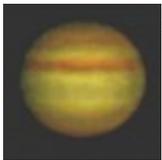
2 thoughts on “The Language of the Soul”



August 27, 2015 at 9:10 pm

Christine J
Baxter

Very well written. You are so right about music reaching the heart and soul of those who can no longer readily access other methods of communication. My time spent working with the elderly was always enhanced with music.



September 6, 2015 at 4:10 pm

debcltx

This topic is truly a whiff of fresh air. The connection of joy and suffering occurred to me at the conclusion of the service for our son, who died very early due to a “very rare” cancer. The joy that I truly felt was about his life, he lived it to the fullest; he was a prosecuting attorney who from his birth wanted to do what he could to keep society straight, within the law. The suffering was for our family, we had lost him forever.

Yes, music can be a great uniter; it can carry an ethereal message without the burden of dogma. I have felt that as a performer in a Barbershop Chorus and listener for the Boston Pops playing Stars and Stripes Forever, for example, on the banks of the Charles River. In all cases, the final result is much greater than the individual parts.

To a more practical side, though, I have experienced this as an engineer, in designing machinery and watching it operate. With the passing of a jet airplane or a locomotive, I can feel that the combined effect is what makes them work; forms their purpose.

If we are in awe of nature, as was John Wesley, then we can find fulfillment in these types of experiences. The human touch, your fellow man, is needed for maximizing the truly ethereal effect.