

Source and Self

Spirit, Source, Non-ordinary Reality, Spiritual Reality and the Great Mystery are terms I use to refer to the realm of the Sacred, the Divine. All of these are notions that lie beyond our ordinary conceptual abilities. Different words have somewhat different connotations and emphasize different aspects: one's state of consciousness, archetypal imagery, energetic reality, ultimate cause, ultimate power, ultimate knowing.

That which can be described, pictured or defined is only a fragment of what we are talking about with these words. Like blind men touching an elephant, we don't know for sure what the whole of it is really like, but we know that it is big. *Great Mystery* seems like a particularly helpful name because it reminds us that we will always fall short in our attempt to grasp and define this reality.

Consider this from Idris Parry:

What guarantee is there that the five senses, taken together, do cover the whole of possible experience? they cover simply our actual experience, our human knowledge of facts or events. There are gaps between the fingers; there are gaps between the senses. In these gaps is the darkness which hides the connection between things... This darkness is the source of our vague fears and anxieties, but also the home of the gods. They alone see the connections, the total relevance of everything that happens; that which now comes to us in bits and pieces, the "accidents" which exist only in our heads, in our limited perceptions¹.

Source is that which contains and connects all the pieces. It is the ultimate territory for which we make maps. It is the ground for every figure. It is that which flows through and the ultimate container which holds the flow. It resides in the center of ourselves and everything else, and beyond the edges of what we can imagine and everywhere in between. Our connection with Source happens in an infinite variety of ways which nourish us every day. We come from Source and we will return to it. We cannot separate ourselves or be separated from it, except in our minds. But the separation in our minds can seem as real as real gets, and there lies suffering.

Source is a term that I have preferred to use in describing the healing work that I do because of its association with Water as foundational for all Life. For purposes of this discussion, I would like to use the word **Source** as a term for that which contains all else. When we are referring to the more abstract, immaterial and invisible aspects of Source, I use the term: **Spirit**. When referring to the visible, tangible and concrete manifestations of Source, I use the word: **Nature**. These lie on a continuum from unmanifest to manifest, "spiritual" to "material" if you will.

¹ Idris Parry. Actual reference unknown. I copied down this quote many years ago.

All of it is Source, all interconnected and dynamically involved in beauty, harmony, unity and Mystery. Between *Spirit* and *Nature*, serving as a bridge between these extremes is **Energy**. That is why *energy* is such an important concept in healing and spiritual work.

SPIRIT
 abstract
 immaterial
 invisible
 |
 |
 more subtle
ENERGY
 less subtle
 |
 |
 visible
 tangible
 concrete
NATURE

In seeking guidance and renewal, I've discovered both in inner-directed awareness, inner-directed action, outer-directed awareness and outer-directed action. Since Source (Spirit, Energy and Nature) are within ourselves and also out in the world, our quest must ultimately involve an integration of all: action and awareness, inner-directed and outer-directed.

That which is between us and Source is the **self**. We could also say: that which is between Source on the inside and Source on the outside is the self. This is the borderland of our individual personality and character. The self contains the memories, habits, definitions, and beliefs that make us uniquely who we are. The self carries all the maps and stories that we have constructed to enable us to interact with our world. The self resides in our minds, but also in our bones, cells, tissues and organs. This boundary, like the membrane of the living cell, is essential for our functioning and our survival.

A strong self provides personal integrity, enabling us to hold ourselves together under stress. In healthy adults, the self is strong and stable yet flexible, able to adapt to a wide variety of situations, able to move in harmony with one's values and guidance and within the realities of the external world.

The self is what learns and changes first in response to new information and experiences. It is shaped by social, biological and energetic forces, including the event of our pre-birth, birth and early childhood experiences. It operates within our conscious awareness and outside conscious awareness. It operates in verbal, visual and feeling/moving modalities. The self functions on many levels simultaneously including our behavior, capabilities, values, beliefs and identity. It includes those things referred to as temperament, character, and personality.



If we are fortunate, the self serves as a flexible meeting place for connecting with Source on the inside and on the outside. If we say the self resides in the mind or Spiritual reality is a state of mind, this can be confusing because of the way we habitually use mind as distinct from body, emotions or spirit. The verbal-mind, the body-mind (including emotions and energy), and the imaging-mind each play a role in facilitating or obstructing our connection with Source.

Unfortunately, in our culture, we are strongly identified with the verbal-mind and its particular expertise in comparing, noticing differences, separating and

analyzing. This particular verbal-mind realm is appropriate for a variety of important analytical activities such as negotiating a contract, planning a strategy or weighing factors in a decision. But it's not a pleasant place to stay stuck in for long periods of time. When our consciousness gets stuck in this state, caught in the conflicts and the analysis in such a way that we cannot perceive Source inside or outside, we can feel immensely lonely, disconnected and isolated. We suffer terribly. This seems to be very common experience for people in our society.

The development of the individual self is profoundly affected by the culture of the society in which that self is immersed. Culture is to society as the self is to the individual. Each unit of culture: a family, a tribe, a community, organization, or a nation; has its own behavior patterns, capabilities, values, beliefs, identity, temperament, character, and personality. Just as the characteristics of the individual self can serve as obstacles or resources for health, harmonious relationships and spiritual connection; every family, tribe, community, organization and nation has its patterns which may serve to facilitate or obstruct health, harmonious relationships and spiritual connection.

When we move along a path of healing and spiritual growth, part of our journey should include expanding our awareness and understanding of the culture in which we live. And as we strive to bring ourselves and our lives into greater harmony with inner guidance, balancing awareness and action, we will find ourselves changing the culture around us for the better as well.