

**Metaphysical/Spiritual Topics of Discussion for Stephen G. Post, author of
*Dignity for Deeply Forgetful People: How Caregivers Can Meet
the Challenges of Alzheimer's Disease***

"We may each have a spark of an Over-Soul within us, like bit of light flowing outwards from a Roman candle, or maybe like little inlets filled with water from the ocean. This is not derived from matter, because there are so many mental experiences people have that are mystical and take them well past time and space, and they have a consciousness of Oneness and of one Mind. Lots of great philosophers and theologians, from Plato to Augustine, have thought that Mind precedes matter in the universe, and that we each have a spark of it within. But we have to be so introspective to elevate our awareness of it, and not be focused on the body. And they believed that we have an original spiritual nature that is good and truthful and beautiful, and a source of inner peace and harmony. So even if the brain deteriorates from Alzheimer's or some other cause, like with my grandmother, she still had this spiritual essence within, and sometimes it became apparent depending on the day. In other words, we don't need to rule out the idea of an eternal soul." —Stephen G. Post, Ph.D.

As Larry Dossey, MD wrote in the foreword to Stephen G. Post's book, *God and Love on Route 80: The Hidden Mystery of Human Connectedness*, "Your idea of a unitary intelligence that pervades everything—what you call IM, for Infinite Mind, is an idea that is threaded from antiquity through the present." He further states that, "There is a chorus of agreement affirming a universal One Mind that subsumes and unites all individual minds." Philosophers, physicians, physicists, pastors, poets, and others throughout the ages have observed this as well.

In relation to the deeply forgetful, and the deep spiritual questions that arise when exploring levels of consciousness, Post has maintained that despite appearances to the contrary, that underneath the neurological damage of dementia, the person is still there, however opaque, they are never "gone" or a mere "shell," and that deeply forgetful people have worth like any human being does, and so we must hold them in grace.

Mind over Matter

In your three decades plus of working with the deeply forgetful, you cite your Grandma Post as being an enormous influence on you when you were young and she was diagnosed with dementia. You write that as she became more forgetful, it never once occurred to you that her life was of any less value than your own or than anyone else's. What brought you to these realizations?

There are many great neuroscientists and philosophers who agree with you that Mind is not derived from Matter. Why do you take a nonmaterialist position on the soul based on your experience with deeply forgetful people over the years?

You studied with Nobel Prize Laureate Sir John Eccles at Chicago, who wrote, "I maintain that the human mystery is incredibly demeaned by scientific reductionism, with its claim in promissory materialism to account eventually for all the spiritual world in terms of patterns of neuronal activity. This belief must be classed as superstition. . . . We have to recognize that we are spiritual being with souls existing in a spiritual world as well as material beings with bodies and brains existing in a material world." Tell us about this quote and why you resonate with it.

There are many competing theories about mind and matter, levels of consciousness; linear rationality vs. consciousness in science and spirituality worlds. How do you bring these divergent views into an understanding so we are on some kind of level playing field we can all explore from?

You write that deeply forgetful people have a consciousness that is of no lesser significance than the consciousness of all us 'hypercognitive' people who tend to disrespect them because they have more lucidity of mind. What are hypercognitive values and how do they prevent us from noticing continuing self-identity, and how have they undermined dignity?

You cite instances, quite common, of paradoxical lucidity, when someone who has been unable to communicate verbally will surprisingly do so as if to let caregivers know that they are still there. How do you explain these moments?

"What about "symbolic rationality" (who we are) and creativity being more important than "linear rationality" (what we do)? Why is symbolic communication both possible and valuable?"

You quote Augustine as saying, "Symbols are powerful because they are visible signs of invisible realities," while maintaining that symbolic reality is more important for the deeply forgetful people than linear reality.

Do you believe that even if the brain deteriorates from Alzheimer's or some other cause, like with your grandmother, we have an eternal spiritual essence within, that can still come through depending on the day. What do you think about the idea of an eternal soul?

You have said "That there is a mystery to the human mind that's not explained by the mere material brain with its cells and tissue." And that you think that the mind, at least in some ways transcends matter, that there's a kind of Over-Soul or infinite Mind in which we all participate in some sort of great connectivity." Please expand on this.

In your experience and research, what roll does the brain play? Do you have a theory on where our memories live?

Equally in question is where we store memories—is there such a thing as cloud memory paradigm as Simon Berkovich's work on Intelligent Memory Introducing Cluster Access introduces, or the discovery of cells in the brain that constitute a positioning system, like GPS (Nobel Prize in Medicine, 2014) implies that the organization of the brain might indeed share the exclusive outside hardware resources by Cloud Computing.

What about Remembered Experiences of Death (RED) or the more common, Near Death Experiences (NDE)? What are the new discoveries that redefine the experiences relating to survival from life-threatening disorders or other themes relating to such experiences when a person has a cognitive and emotional experience that occurs during a period of loss of consciousness in relation to an event. In these cases, people retain their identity and return with distinct memories of experiences while seemingly unconscious or non-responsive physically, with no brain activity registering.