

The Path of Natural Light

by

Aaron

Channeled through Barbara Brodsky

Part One

Transcripts, September, 1993
through January, 1994



Deep Spring Publications

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Introduction

As we ponder the best way to get Aaron's teachings out to those of you who live far away and have come to value them, it's clear that a "book" which is carefully edited takes too much time and work for our limited resources. These unedited transcripts of the weekly classes from September, 1993 to mid-January, 1994 offer the weekly sessions just as they were channeled. They have not been fully checked by Aaron for accuracy. There may be occasional errors in the transcribing. The overall sense is correct. Please bring inconsistencies and typographical errors to our attention so they can be clarified. Thank you.

In the summer of 1994, the continuation, through June, 1994 will be available.

It is our hope that this entire work will eventually be professionally published and nationally distributed. Meanwhile, we are glad to be able to offer it in this form.

The book No Chain at All, the edited transcripts of January to June, 1993, will provide useful foundation for those of you who wish deeper understanding of the conditioned nature of all phenomena. That book is not necessary, however, to understanding of this one.

Many of you have asked us to include all of the transcript, discussion as well as Aaron's talks, so we haven't cut anything. We've also included several private sessions (Aaron, Barbara and Karen, with Karen transcribing as it was channeled) where Aaron spoke in more detail about these teachings.

There is wide variety offered here. Aaron does have a "teaching plan" for the year, which becomes apparent if you read through the book from the start, but you can dip in anywhere. Many people come regularly every week; some come occasionally. New people frequently appear, and some stay and join our weekly sessions. We've found Aaron speaks clearly to us all.

His focus this year has been teaching the balance of relative and ultimate reality. Thus, some of his talks are about working lovingly and skillfully with the catalysts of our daily lives. Some are about choosing the space and perspective which allow us not to get caught in these issues. We don't "get rid of" the issues that cause us discomfort, but see it all more clearly as manifestation of pure awareness. Duality falls away. Our lives become more spacious.

There are talks about working with the heavy emotions on the relative plane, about fear, relationships, grief, forgiveness, and more. There are also talks about the "Light Body" which is always perfect. He asked us to look at a perfect white sheet of paper; crumple it; unfold it. Can we see the perfect piece of paper which still exists in the wrinkled sheet? Where do we fix our gaze, on the wrinkles or the natural perfection of the paper?

In just the same way, when we fix our focus on our fear, anger, greed, and other heavy emotions, we practice those. We see in a dual way, distorted/undistorted. We try to hold this, get rid of that. When we first find equanimity with what has arisen in us, and then literally fix our gaze on the innate perfection of all arising, we release old distortion. Just let it go, no aversion, only release of that which no longer serves a purpose, and

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which was never “real” in the first place. Where do we fix our gaze? There are many practices introduced here for this work. Please take whatever is of value to you.

Acknowledgments

With thanks to all of those whose commitment and hard work have drawn forth these teachings. Their work is reflected in the questions asked and the depth of the teachings offered in response.

With special thanks to David Brown and Karen Weber whose energetic and careful transcribing makes it possible to share these sessions so promptly with all of you.

With thanks to Aaron for his continued, loving guidance.

Barbara

If you are new to our work and wish to know more about it, to read other of Aaron's books, or to receive our newsletters, please send us your name and address. All group work with Aaron, and newsletters, are supported by donation.

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Wednesday, September 15, 1993

Aaron's talk

I am Aaron. My greetings and love to you all. It is a joy to feel your presence once again. I hope you have had a joyful and growth filled summer and have returned inspired and ready to work.

What I would like to do here tonight is to define our work together, as I understand it, offering many leads of directions that we might take on these Wednesday nights. Those of you who know me know that I am willing to talk about metaphysics, but that I do not consider metaphysics of primary importance in our work together. Of far greater import to me is the fact that you are here in incarnation for a reason. This earth is your schoolroom and you are here to learn.

What is that learning about? How can we help it on its way? There is not a human on this earth who does not suffer fear, pain and bewilderment at times. Pain disorients some of you more than others, but there is not any incarnate human who has not experienced some degree of fragmentation, and who is not seeking healing and wholeness.

I have spoken about the four bodies, physical, emotional, mental and spirit bodies. I'm not going to go into details about this now; it's readily available in transcript. (See *"The Universe According to Aaron."*) Your work as a human is not to get rid of the emotional and mental bodies—not to stop thought, not to stop emotions—but to cease your reactivity to these, so that you may function more fully from the spirit body, which is non-separate and understands its interbeing with all that is. It is the reactivity to the emotions and thoughts that leads you into a deluded sense of self and separation. In time you come to enjoy those physical, emotional and mental aspects of the incarnation without identification with them as self. You find and rest in your true self, your ultimate perfection.

We are working in two directions, the horizontal and vertical, as I will explain. On the horizontal plane we are dealing with each human, its suffering, neurotic tendencies, fears, dreams and hopes. We regard each being trying to find the healing for which it took birth. And yet if care is not given one can create a more solid sense of self and separation as one does that work. There is so much "somebodyness" in being the one who is mindful, who is suffering, who is healing.

So the ideal path combines the horizontal work of dissolving the fragmentation and the vertical work of moving into true understanding of emptiness of self. Most of you have related to the world from a center of "me." That is the root of so much of your suffering. You know that. You have each experienced the difference when you come out of that "me" and move with a truly compassionate heart that experiences its connections with the earth itself and all of the beings that reside on the earth. How do we find that true self within us? Not the small ego self, but the Buddha or Christ consciousness, Pure Awareness, the pure, illuminated mind. Tibetans call it Rigpa. Call it what you will, that space where all is connected. It is a space all beings experience at times, but you are not taught to recognize the experience.

Once you identify that space, stabilize your understanding and become more and more able to live from within it, the reality of your ultimate, true being consistently penetrates the illusion of "me," so that when you see yourself grasping and afraid you know that is relative reality. Then the experience of true self comes in and says, "There's nobody here to be afraid, there is nothing to be afraid of. It's just old mind doing its thing. Just that." Then you begin to know your fear as illusion.

I want to give you an example. First I ask you to visualize an image with me. Picture a brand new, totally flat plane of earth that has never been marked in any way. One raindrop falls. It must go somewhere. It runs downhill, from high ground to low ground, etching just the very finest scratch on the surface of that new earth. A second raindrop falls and hits in the same place. It also runs down, deepening the scratch. Fifty, one hundred, one million raindrops. First you have a stream, and then eventually the Grand Canyon. That canyon was carved not by an atomic blast, but by a series of raindrops, each one making just the slightest deepening of the present indentation.

This is how karma works. There is a reaction to some catalyst and it creates a scratch. If there is not attention to the forming of that scratch it becomes a tendency to react that way. And then a habit. Then the habit hardens into character and will grow into our neurotic patterns, the ways we relate over and over to one another.

Let us look at unworthiness in this way. I don't think there is anyone in this room who at one time or another has not felt unworthy. We don't need to look for original cause; indeed, we can not find original cause. It is not useful to search for it. We simply accept that somewhere along the way, in this and certainly in prior lifetimes, there was a reaction (if you're not comfortable with the idea of prior lifetimes, that's fine: just in this lifetime). Somebody frowned at you, or there was a sense of feeling excluded from a group. Whatever it may have been, the mind leaped to the idea: "I am unworthy. I am inadequate to this situation in some way." Probably there was fear and strong emotion. That sense of inadequacy was part of the protective device shielding from the intensity of the emotion. Attention was not paid to that first scratch. It became like a scratched record where the needle catches in the groove, each time deepening it and eventually creating the Grand Canyon.

Now you come into a situation of feeling excluded in a group and your reaction is that old mind experience of "I am unworthy." On the horizontal level we look, through our meditation, at the experience of feeling unworthy because in order to work with it you must know what you are feeling. You begin to experience the ownership of that feeling, "My unworthiness is me," the perspective of the ego-self.

Then you might ask yourself, in the vertical direction: "What is really happening in this moment? Who is unworthy? Is unworthiness what's happening? No. Those people are just talking together; they don't know me. Or, perhaps they are, indeed, excluding me. That doesn't mean I'm unworthy." The unworthiness is old mind conditioning. It never was real. Nor is worthiness real. There is no worthiness or unworthiness. There is only being; in this moment, there is just being.

When we look with bare perception, freeing ourselves from mind's old patterns, we see that there is no worthiness or unworthiness in this moment. And there truly is nobody, no self, to feel worthy or unworthy. There is just this mind stream that has gotten caught in

the pattern of feeling unworthy. It's not "me"; it's just a pattern repeated over and over. You penetrate that illusion of worthiness/unworthiness, of self.

At that moment you find yourself able to truly rest in the pure mind awareness of connection, totally devoid of fear. Pure awareness may only last an instant, but it cuts through all the illusion of worthy/unworthy, good or bad, acceptance or rejection. It cuts through the illusion of "me." Both the horizontal work and the vertical work are necessary. One finds healing through what I am calling horizontal work, through the many practices that we introduce here. One also cuts through this fog of illusion and sees that there was never anybody who needed to heal in the first place.

What we have here, essentially, is relative and ultimate reality. You must live in both. You stand astride a threshold; one foot in relative reality, one foot in ultimate reality. When you begin it is as if there is an infinite wall spread out from that door frame. You think you see relative reality when you look this way and ultimate reality when you look the other way. Light and darkness, white and black, but there is a wall that separates it. The wall is illusion. It is built of the illusion of your fear. Much of our work here is to come to know that wall as illusion, to come to know that you can stand with a foot on each side of this doorway, and that there is no wall at all. The darkness and the daylight meet at dawn and dusk.

In terms of your human life you have heard me say many times that you must always do everything in your power to attend to suffering. That is the relative reality. The ultimate reality is to approach that suffering without attachment, to know that you can not fix another, or the world, and that you don't understand what is really happening. But you still must work with as much wisdom, skill and love as you can in the world. You do not disassociate yourself from the world. As you work, you stabilize a sense of equanimity and letting go, knowing that ultimately it will work itself out as it needs to.

Attending to one's own suffering, there is the relative side that chooses to take care of itself, to protect itself. And the ultimate understanding that there is never anything separate from the self, so there is nothing from which you need to defend yourself.

I see our work then as finding that balance between relative and ultimate—the horizontal plane of healing and the vertical plane of knowing there was never anybody that needed to heal. With wisdom and pure awareness, that whole sense of self dissolves. When you find that Christ or Buddha consciousness, that higher self, within you, you know it was never in need of healing to begin with. It has always been perfect, always been whole. The whole notion of fragmentation was an illusion, but it is the illusion of the relative reality, and the suffering within that illusion must be attended to. The human manifestation needs healing.

I'm going to keep this opening talk short. That is the essence of the work I hope we will be doing here this year. Obviously there is much richness within that essence. Last year we began to explore some wonderful metaphysical questions like simultaneous time, UFOs, different religions of the earth and many, many different kinds of questions. We also discussed dreams. Something I'd like to get into with you this year is called lucid dreaming (knowing when you are dreaming) and some different kinds of dream work with fear. Also, more work with body energy, becoming more aware of the chakras and starting to understand better when they are blocked and how to work skillfully with that blockage. We will relate body energy to the energy source and the Light Body. I want

you to understand karma more clearly, and to understand its relationship with energy and intention. I want to be receptive to your questions and needs. Together, I would like to create a program that is less scattered than it has been on Wednesday nights in the past, something that will lead us into a continuum.

We will pause now for a break. After the break, during question and answer time, I hope that we can build on the more rapid dialogue that we began in the spring, allowing more give and take. Remember that I am not the only teacher here, so I hope that you will find time to hear one another as well. If there is a question asked that I answer and some of you have thoughts you would like to share about it, please do so. Let us all learn together.

It would also be my hope that these Wednesday night sessions can be transcribed as quickly as possible rather than taking months to do so. If we do have some continuous learning experience happening here and there are those coming regularly and those coming irregularly, those who are not able to come every week can read these transcripts and move with us. That is all.

Questions and Answers

Question: It seems to me that the more refined my feelings become, through meditation and spiritual practice, the more sensitive I become to the ultimate pain of loss and change. There is more joy and, paradoxically, more pain.

Barbara: Let me speak to that briefly. Yes. It's not that there is more joy and more pain, but that we are letting go of the barriers that we have had to protect ourselves. We're allowing ourselves to feel it all more fully. When we allow ourselves to feel the joy, we also allow ourselves to feel the pain.

The core of it is in the statement, "the more sensitive I become to the ultimate pain of loss and change." One of the hardest things to accept is that nothing is permanent; there really is nothing to hold on to. Everything that comes into our experience is ultimately unsatisfying in that we can not hold on to it. No matter how wonderful it is, we can't keep it. It's not that the experience itself is unsatisfying, but we create that dissatisfaction through our fear that we are going to lose it. You're eating something delicious, or you're having a wonderful conversation and feeling so connected with somebody. Can you hold onto those forever? Would you want to? What if you kept eating, or kept that conversation going for weeks? How long would you want to? So, it's not that the experience in itself is unsatisfying; that meal, conversation or symphony that you're listening to, those can be very wonderful. But you can only experience the beauty of it when there's no attachment or holding on to it.

So, that's the core of what we are trying to learn. How do we live our lives, really opening our heart to what we're experiencing, but not getting attached to it and trying to hold on to it, which creates so much of suffering? A real sadness for me is when I see people around me enjoying something for awhile and then they hold on and what was joy turns to sorrow. It hurts to see how much suffering people create for themselves, and to know I can't fix that. To me that's the deepest pain. It shifts, from that which is beautiful to that which is terrible, in an instant, because our mind shifts from just being with it to grasping.

Aaron: I don't have a great deal to add to what was predominately a statement and not a question. Only to agree with what Barbara has said, and to raise the question: once we accept that life is pain as well as joy and learn to live with an open heart which doesn't push away pain or grasp at pleasure, does that not reduce the suffering? There is still going to be pain. We have talked here many times about the difference between pain and suffering. Pain is a given, as long as you are in human form. But it need not lead to suffering. Your suffering grows out of your resistance to that which life gives you.

What truly will break your heart is to understand this and see that you can not make another understand it until they are ready. Each being holds on to its own suffering until it's ready to let go of it. All you can ultimately do is live your life with as much love and compassion as possible. And be willing to have your heart broken over and over and over again, without closing that heart and thereby limiting your ability to love. You can also live the dharma as clearly and purely as you can and allow your lives to reflect to others that there is a choice. Suffering of attachment and aversion are not the only options. I wonder if there is some useful discussion of this amongst yourselves. How do

you experience it? Do you also find that as you move deeper on a spiritual path you experience more joy and more pain?

Barbara: M has said, "Yes." Aaron asks, "Is that okay?"

M: It doesn't matter if it's okay, it just is. It's hard to differentiate between my personal sorrow and world pain, the pain of all beings on earth. Since I've been doing metta meditation for two years now, the sense of identification with the suffering of earthly beings has grown deeper; sometimes I am overcome with deep sadness and don't know why. Was it just triggered by longing for someone, or something someone said at work which made me worry about keeping my job, or is it all a continuum? One pain, one sadness, a realization of our wholeness and non-separation, our connectedness to all life on earth? I cannot tell the difference anymore. It's just such a sudden and deep sorrow that comes over me. Most days of the week, sometime during the day, maybe several times. But it is tolerable. It's a softer feeling than the anger I used to carry around constantly, it seemed, and with equal intensity. So, having suffered the pain of that anger and separation, this is just okay. I am experiencing joy at alternate times, perhaps deeper joy.

Aaron: What happens, M, is that all of you constantly swing back and forth from the relative "I" to the ultimate "I," from small ego self to higher self—to pure awareness, let us say. And so what you have claimed as "my pain" becomes "our pain," the pain of us all. That de-personalizes it, and the depersonalization defuses it, so that it no longer boils the emotions in the same way. There is pain, but there is no ownership of the pain, so there is nothing that needs to be done about it. No striking out against it in quite the same way.

This is precisely the point that I was making in my opening talk, that coming to that realization is what allows skillful, compassionate and wise action in the world without attachment to results. When one is working in a place where there is terrible suffering, disease, starvation and famine, one can be personally devastated by it if one takes each death personally, thinking "It's my fault. I should be able to fix it." How could you fix it? All you can do is work with what's in front of you. If there is disease, one might be a physician and work skillfully with that disease but not be able to cure it. What if there is famine and you are there to try and help and give out food, but there is simply not enough food to feed all the bodies? How do you work with that intensity of suffering which surrounds us in the world, unless you can let go of the personal?

But the pain is still there and if you deny the pain then you are closing your heart in protection. When you know you are closing your heart, then it becomes possible to open the heart again—to allow yourself to feel that hurt, to be vulnerable over and over and over again. It is possible only when you transcend that small ego self that resists being hurt and cease to need to defend in that way.

There is a very beautiful story in a book that Barbara once read. (*"The Parable of Mushin" in the book Everyday Zen by Charlotte Joko Beck.*) The story is about a young man who had just lost his job. He came home to tell his wife he lost his job and there was a note saying, "I've left." He was feeling terrible pain and he decided, "Well, I'm going to become enlightened." He had done some reading about meditation, a book about "How to catch the train of enlightenment." So he studied the book, then went to the railroad station and decided, "I'm going to just sit here on the platform, follow the

book's instructions, and see if I can't move myself on to this stream of enlightenment that goes by."

Others came and asked, "What is he doing?" They decided to sit with him. After a while he had a community there. The young man was still trying to meditate and catch his train. Slowly he was forced to open his eyes and see that people were there who were not being fed, people that were ill. People had brought their children but were so intent on finding enlightenment that they were not caring for their children. He said, "Somebody's got to do it." So he ceased meditating and he began to organize food preparation, schools, games and other activities for the young people. He spent increasing amounts of time on this.

Sometimes he would look around with some resentment, see all the people meditating and say, "Why can't I do that? But these people are hungry and these people are sick and the young people need somebody to organize their activities. We need more housing," and so on. He stopped focusing on catching the train and began instead to focus on alleviating suffering, helping others. He put "self" aside. He worked, and he meditated, and he worked some more, just doing what needed to be done.

One night when he was very tired from a full day of work, he sat down on the station platform. There was a full moon and it was a lovely evening. Though he was exhausted, he just sat. He decided to sit all night. This train of enlightenment had streamed through everyday without stopping. He no longer grasped at catching it; he was too busy.

Now he sat and along came the train; it stopped and he got on. Suddenly he realized he had always been on the train. He was the train. It was his grasping that prevented him from recognizing it. He learned that by giving himself fully in service to others he transcended this small ego self that was attempting to escape suffering. He simply gave himself over into whatever pain there was and allowed himself to be undefended with that pain. Then the small ego self dissolved and he discovered the true meaning of enlightenment.

I've greatly reduced the story. If any of you are interested in reading it, Barbara can direct you to it.

M: I had an experience of intense joy and wondered: what if I become caught in this joy and thereby lose the experience of others' suffering, what if I forget about that?

Aaron: You must look deeper, M. Joy and pain are one and the same. While allowing yourself to experience joy, ask yourself this: am I using this joy as an escape? Is there denial in it? Or is it simply joy? Only if you experience the joy of your connection with others, through your teaching or in other areas, can you experience the pain. So, no, you are not denying the experience of suffering. Denial takes tremendous effort; it is very painful work. But I would ask you to look deeper into that place where joy and pain come together. Do you understand?

M: Yes.

Barbara: D is speaking of a time when he was less aware and of the intensity with which he sometimes feels today's pain. The denial of his feelings can sometimes be appealing because today's pain is so intense. Is that correct?

D: Yes, but that is a minor part of it. The point I wanted to make is that being more open to my pain is, indeed, painful, but overall I find living with awareness and acceptance of my pain to be easier than living in denial.

Aaron: In an earlier talk (*in newsletter, Nov. 12, 1992 transcript in Vol. 1, No. 1, and also in introductory newsletter*), I spoke about empowerment. Surrendering the self does not mean disempowering the self, but is actually empowering, because you surrender the small ego self, which is helpless anyway. You come into full contact with the higher self, or Christ or Buddha consciousness. From that place of connection you are empowered, not as small self, but as divine self. When you live with awareness you live with at least some sense of the expression of that divine self. It is that empowerment which makes it so much easier. Painful, yes, but there is no longer this sense of complete helplessness.

Barbara: I'm now paraphrasing Aaron. He wonders if you experience it that way?

N: Awareness is very powerful. I would not have thought of it in that way. My perceived pain has lessened, really lessened. I have a greater understanding of it and somehow it's all okay. There's not this up and down, up and down. I'm almost "blah." But that feels very good. A steadiness. I have come to realize how it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. It's different.

Barbara: There's so much more space around it. What Aaron was just saying about empowerment, it's the difference between feeling trapped in your pain because you claim ownership to your pain, or no longer owning it. It's just our pain and there's space for it.

N: And the awareness that D spoke of, the awareness is like—"Oh, yeah, ah-ha!"—it's that kind of thing. It's nice. I want to grasp it.

Barbara: It's not graspable. The minute you grasp it you get into the personal, with the small ego self there trying to grasp. And that sets off the whole chain of suffering again! Lets move on to the next question, which Aaron says is related.

(*Reading question.*) I have a neighbor who consistently violated my boundaries this summer. He finally so blatantly violated my space that I had to say something to him. I was very angry at him. While I was feeling this anger and rage I tried to convince myself that there was no need to be angry, and to see it as something I could step aside from. It worked for a few minutes. But compared to the several hours I was enraged I don't feel like I'm imbibing the concepts that none of it really exists very well.

Aaron. Who says it is nonexistent? On the relative plane, that pain and anger are very much present! My dear ones, anger is energy. It is neither good nor bad; it transcends good and bad. Your reactivity to your anger may cause harm. But the anger, in itself, is just energy. We must not confuse equanimity with complacency. Equanimity is a sense of acceptance of what is, which allows for anger when there is obvious injustice. There can be skillful response to anger, which helps to alleviate suffering. Or there can be unskillful reaction to anger, which increases suffering.

One does not choose whether to be angry or not to be angry. Rather, one works with the anger, knowing that this mind/body is experiencing anger. What are you going to do with anger? To put it aside is not a choice. It's not like a light switch. You can not

turn it on and off. But you can understand how anger arises in you, become aware of how it pulls in the personal self that needs to defend. Begin to see how reactivity to anger occurs, and to work skillfully with your anger.

In this way you become able to say no when somebody is using you as a doormat in some way or the other. You don't need to be a doormat. But you can say no with love rather than fear. This is the core of it. You are not avoiding your emotions; or if there is a tendency to avoid, you know that there is a tendency to want to avoid, because of the discomfort emotions bring up. Be mindful of what is present within you at any moment and work with it with love, not fear—love that permits you to feel your feelings, and to say “no” to another. That “no” does not have to be “I hate you.” “No” is just “no.” It shares respect for the self with respect for the other, because it comes from a place of awareness that there really is no self or other. You are not saying “no” to the other, you're saying “no” to the situation in which another is misusing you because of their own fear. Essentially, you are saying “no” to fear. It is the courage to say “no” to fear which inspires others to say “no.” This is where anger becomes a catalyst for compassion instead of hatred. Again I would welcome further questions or discussion.

Barbara: Someone just said her anger is uncomfortable. She said that she would rather get in touch with the fear underneath. We can do that. We can see the source of any emotion that's arising in us. If it's greed, if it's anger, whatever it is. If we get in touch with the fear, shame, loss or whatever is the root of that emotion, then often we can find a lot of compassion for ourselves and it's so much easier. Because there's not judgment about fear. We don't judge ourselves for being afraid, but we do judge ourselves for feeling greed or feeling anger. This process can lead us to making space for even the anger.

M is saying she thinks that it's different by gender, how we react to different emotions.

Aaron: This is true, M, and is part of the reason why you sometimes choose a male body and sometimes choose a female body. You choose the body that is most appropriate to work with that which you need to work with in that lifetime. Do not neglect the fact that how you react to different emotions also varies by culture. You choose birth within a culture that will give you the most access to the opportunity to practice. Some of you, then, feel “It would be so much easier if I had been born into a different sex or a different culture,” so you wouldn't feel some emotion so strongly. Precisely; it would be easier! But you are not incarnate for “easier.” You have been born as you have been born just so that you will feel it strongly, so that it will be a catalyst for growth.

Barbara: R has asked: what if there is anger not because you are being misused but because there is selfishness, or fear that there won't be enough to give to meet others' needs.

Aaron: This is why we emphasize mindfulness. Whatever the anger is about, know that that's what the anger is about. Then it becomes workable. If it's anger because of being misused, know there is anger of being misused and a fear that you will be hurt. If there is anger that another is asking for something and fear that you can't give it, know that you are feeling anger because of fear that your own needs will not be met—that too much will be taken from you. Simply know the fear. Identify it, be with it. Offer yourself compassion, to this human that feels fear. You are not gods, you are humans.

Fear exists. It's okay to feel fear. This is the crucial point. When you give yourself permission to feel your feelings, it all becomes workable. What is the judgment about?

Barbara: Here's a different kind of question. (*Reading question.*) In my throat is a blockage which is ready for healing and release. When it constricts I say, "I choose light here." I'm tired of this. What can help me?

Aaron is going to lead a guided meditation. He's going to ask us each to find the area of constriction in ourselves. The person whose question it was, focus on the throat.

Aaron: I would talk a bit before we fully enter the meditation. Where is healing to be found? What blocks healing? Each of you carries the pains not only of this lifetime, but of so many lives. Often, there is a desire to open an area that has been blocked. But simultaneously there is fear, because that blockage was originally conceived to offer a sense of protection. Granted, it did not work, but nevertheless there is the illusion of protection.

The primary example here is the barricade that you build around your heart. The heart is always open, but we build walls to protect that vulnerable space within. It is proof of the heart's sensitivity that one needs to build walls. If the heart was not always open and knowing its intimate connection with God and all that is, there would be no need for walls. So, when you feel the heart closed in and say, "I want to open it," you must also ask, "If I open it, in what way am I making myself vulnerable to this increased pain? Is there a part of me that wants to stay defended because it fears this pain?"

What I would like to do with you now, for just a few minutes, is a variation of Tonglen, the meditation practice we have done of breathing in light and sending it out to suffering, then visualizing that suffering as a heavy, black mass, breathing it in and releasing it to God, to the universe, whatever feels appropriate to you

Meditation

(Pause at dots. Longer pause between each paragraph.)

First I want to you to simply experience yourself sitting in a cylinder of light.

As much as is possible, feel the presence of the divine or eternal, the deathless, or whatever name you wish to call it. Feel that light surrounding you like a cloak, touching the crown of your head and entering deep into the core of your being ... flowing off your head and down your shoulders, enveloping your body.

I would ask you to envision as the source of that light that which is the deepest personal embodiment of truth for you. You may simply call it God, or it may be the Christ or the Buddha; it may be a living teacher or a past saint. You may find it most comfortable to simply envision God, as light, sound or energy, or it may be easier to step that God energy down into an embodiment of whatever being you choose. But be aware that the same divinity resides in the God energy itself, in the teacher and in yourself.

See that divine light moving through this embodiment of love and truth, and then shining out of that heart directly to your heart ... Feel yourself fully enveloped by that divine light, and rest in it.

Resting there, allow the experience of your own divine nature. Infinite love and compassion. Infinitely pure and brilliant light. Rest in it as much as you are able.

Do not worry about whether you are resting in it perfectly. Let go of concepts of how much of that light you can let in; just connect your heart to the beloved's heart. To the heart of God ... Breathing it in ... Exhaling all separate self ... Breathing in love and light ... Become your highest self ... Rest in pure mind.

Now, I would like you to visualize the human that you are, sitting here complete with fears and perceived limitations.

Without much thought about it, move awareness to the area of most blockage in that physical or emotional body.

Let your first thought of location be where awareness comes to rest ... Trust your heart, trust your wisdom. No agonizing over which spot to use.

Move awareness back to the divine self. It is this aspect which does this meditation.

Breathe in that perfect light. Let it flow through this master, teacher or guru into this highest aspect of yourself, the divine self. Breath it out to the mind/body, to the place of fear and blockage in the human aspect.

Now, see that blockage in the human aspect as a heavy blackness. Allow the divine self to breath in that heaviness.

With the inhalation let it run through the heart, and release it to that embodiment of truth and of God itself.

Breathe in light and send it out to that human's constricted place.

Breathe in the fear and heaviness of that constriction and release it.

Breathe in light.

Filling yourself with that divine light and with a heart of tenderness and compassion to this human who feels fear and constriction, send that light out to where it is most needed in that human.

See it spread its warmth around that place of blockage. See it illuminate and dissolve the blockage.

Breathe in that blockage itself, the fear, the constriction, with a heart of utmost compassion for this suffering human.

Hold this heaviness in the heart of your highest self for a breath or two, and feel the presence of the Christ or Buddha or whatever being you choose ... Ask for that being's help in the releasing of this heaviness to God, to the universe, to the eternal.

I'm going to be quite for a few minutes now and ask you to work with this process on your own, so that you may stabilize it and make it your own.

(Several minutes of silent practice.)

When you become aware of a constriction in the physical body, bring awareness to it in this way, touching it with love rather than judgment, working compassionately to touch that fear with light and allow its gradual dissolution.

You will find that this is a very real, useful tool in attending to your own blockages. It can also be used for an area of the body where there is physical pain such as a neck ache or back ache, because that pain often does signify energy blockage in that area.

As we end this mediation, may we draw our attention to all beings in the world who are suffering and offer them the same light which we have offered to ourselves.

May all beings find an end to suffering. *(Bell.)*

May all beings find their hearts opening in love and compassion. *(Bell.)*

May all beings everywhere find perfect peace. *(Bell.)*

Wednesday, September 22, 1993

Barbara: We have a small group tonight. We are going to start with questions rather than a formal talk from Aaron. D has a question based on last week's discussion.

(Reading question.) Aaron has spoken many times on the subject of fear being at the base of many emotions such as anger, greed, jealousy and so on. He has also spoken about fear being an illusion, an outgrowth of the illusion that there is a separate self. This illusion of a separate self leads to the need to protect. There really is no need to protect because there is no separate self.

However, when I am feeling emotions strongly, in fact throughout most of the day, it certainly seems like I am a separate self. My physical, emotional and mental bodies seem separate, albeit related, to those of others. I can more easily comprehend that my spiritual body is connected to all that is. The concept of connected physical, emotional and mental bodies is an interesting intellectual one, but one that I have little direct experience of.

So, my question is this. When I am experiencing strong emotions, I have a tendency to want to avoid them. I sometimes stop and consider that the emotion is stemming, ultimately, from an illusion of separation. But part of my motive for doing this can be to get rid of the emotion, rather than transcend it through the wisdom and/or experience of this ultimate illusion. Will Aaron address how best to use this information concerning the illusion of self that he is giving us?

Barbara: Aaron is suggesting that your questions tie in with one another, and he would like to hear from more of you. It doesn't have to be related to this question. What is the most pressing thing that you felt a need to know tonight? Some of it will tie together and some of it will be answered separately.

Barbara: Four more questions. *(Reading questions.)*

I still feel guilty and somewhat frightened when I say "no" to a loved one. Does this change?

How do I proceed in working towards spiritual growth?

Why I am I so angry at work? Why is it that with my talent I am working with "dumb idiots"? (I do not normally use these terms.)

Because of my depression, I am not able to go into deep sleep or meditation. How can I get back in control of my mind?

Aaron: I am Aaron. Good evening and my love to you all. Anger, fear of saying no, depression, working with emotions and living a spiritual life. What do all of these "pain questions" have to do with living a spiritual life? What do they have to do with each other? I would like you to toss this back and forth between yourselves for a few minutes. Hear your question and each other's questions. It's not that you need to come up with one group question; we will address them individually. But they are deeply connected. How? I pass it back to you. That is all.

Barbara: H is saying that a lot of the questions speak of the person as being less than they want to be, as if something is lacking. He sees self criticism in the questions.

D: I think that working with these emotional issues is spiritual work.

Aaron: Precisely. Can you see how it becomes twisted when you fight with the emotions so that you are relating to them from a place of fear? It then ceases to be spiritual work and becomes an attempt to get rid of the emotion rather than to learn from it. When the question is one of getting rid of, there is so much tension involved, so much self involved, it is not opportune for learning. Can you accept the fact that throughout life there are going to be times of discomfort? While spiritual work is always happening, catalyst is not opportunity for learning unless there is deep awareness and some degree of willingness to let go, relax and investigate whatever has arisen. The tension and fear limit the breadth of awareness and investigation.

We are getting wonderful responses here, please continue.

L: I don't really want to accept the process of working through feelings, and perhaps even embracing them. Instead I just want to know how soon it will dissipate. How soon can I get rid of it? I don't really allow myself to be in the process and embrace the feelings.

D: I agree with what L just said. It is true for me as well. I wonder why I am so afraid of my feelings? I have gotten through many painful situations in my life, yet I still fight them, despite this experience of having gotten through them before.

Barbara: It's very painful and it's very scary. We get hurt and we learn to protect ourselves. "Getting through them" can be gritting your teeth and forging ahead. It doesn't necessarily mean being aware.

Aaron: I also see this in physical terms, in terms of your body energy. You know that I see you as light, not as form. When there is love and openheartedness, let us say absence of war with fear (not absence of fear), your energy radiates outward. Fear creates a constriction to that energy. But when you meet that fear with a degree of compassion, it doesn't really confine your energy. The fear becomes a permeable barrier. Energy radiates out through that barrier. The fear is there, but it doesn't hem in your energy. The barrier becomes impermeable when fear becomes controlling. That is, when you become frightened of fear and pain and feel a need to take over and control; to get rid of the situation. Then your energy is confined into you.

I want to add this to what D said. The difference, as I see it, is one of having compassion for yourself. It relates much to self judgment. Let us look a bit at what blocks the natural compassion of each heart.

When there is fear or pain there may be aversion to that fear or pain. I specify "aversion to" rather than "discomfort with." Let me define my terms.

There is discomfort with pain and some level of disliking it. There are nerve endings in your physical body, and there also are what I call emotional body nerve endings. If you touch something that is burning hot, you feel physical pain. That is the discomfort level. It is simply a sense response. The sense of touch having made contact with something hot, there is burning; the body knows discomfort. If you move into a room where there is angry energy the energy nerve endings, let us call them, contact that angry energy

and there is discomfort. There is not yet liking or disliking, there is just discomfort; real pain. This is the body's signal that there is danger. You need that or you would freeze or burn yourself. You would ignore the signs of pain that tell you to take care, for example, of a twisted ankle. So you learn that you must attend to your body's pain signals in order to be loving to your body.

Mind and body are in relationship with one another. Your mind knows pain if you've touched something very hot, even though the nerve endings are in your body. When there is angry energy around you, the emotional body nerve endings experience that energy as discomfort and then mind knows that discomfort has been experienced.

You can attend to pain without moving into like or dislike, but usually like or dislike arises. With liking or disliking the mind is brought into play in distorted ways. This is not mind as it experiences in this moment, but what we call "old" or conditioned mind.

You have six senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch and mind. The five physical senses make contact with a physical object; just sense contact, devoid of consciousness of the contact. The mind must come into play to know that contact has occurred. The contact may be pleasant or unpleasant, comfortable or uncomfortable. The pain or lack of pain, the comfort or discomfort, takes place within the physical sense. The like and dislike takes place in the mind.

When you move to like or dislike there is still not a sense of fear, a sense that "I've got to get rid of this" or "I've got to hold on to that," that is still another step. There is just liking or disliking.

The mind is part of that liking or disliking, and here is where you get trapped. When you see the liking and disliking you are habituated to grasp at that which you like and push away that which you dislike. You are habituated because you have not looked deeply into your relationships with pleasure and pain. You feel helpless, as if you're out of control. This is liking and disliking without awareness. It is awareness that makes the difference. When you can know that there is liking or disliking happening and see any judgment or fear that arises, you don't need to move into that stronger stance of grasping or aversion. There is just liking and disliking. Just another of those clouds that we keep talking about moving through you.

When there is liking or disliking, you can ask yourself, "Who is liking or disliking?" This is a subtle but very important point. Each time you make the shift from emptiness of self into solidified self you deepen the habit of thinking of yourself as a separate self. Then you begin the war of "I shouldn't act that way" or "I shouldn't feel that way" or "He/she shouldn't act that way towards me." You get into turmoil about your emotions.

On a relative level, of course there is a self. It is compassion towards that relative self that frees you to transcend the relative self and come back to center, back to the place of connectedness, where there is only comfort/discomfort, or perhaps liking or disliking happening.

Sentient beings that you are will always choose not to suffer; there is nothing wrong with that. But it is only through the perspective of the centered non-self that you can begin to see that there is no duality between comfort and discomfort, pleasure and pain. No matter how you live your life there is going to be pleasure and there is going to be pain. Sometimes that which gives you pleasure in one moment will give you pain in the next

moment. Just think of a campfire on a cold night. You move close to get warm; after a few minutes it starts to burn and you step back. Then you start to feel cold so you step forward again. Again it starts to burn, and again you step back. Sense contact of heat and cold. Mind knowing there is heat and cold, sometimes preferring heat sometimes preferring the cold. Liking and disliking arising. Can you just sit back and watch the whole thing? There is no suffering in that, just a smile towards this very human self that approaches the warmth, gets too hot, steps back, gets too cold, steps forward again.

The suffering arises when self criticism comes in, when you start to be an "I" and say, "Why can't I get this right, just the right distance from the fire?" Anger arises at the self, the cold night, the too-hot fire. Then there is aversion and grasping; then there is suffering. As soon as you are fighting with what is, then you are suffering. Notice that it has nothing to do with the campfire, the cold night, or yourself. Rather, the suffering grows out of the mind's relationship with these things.

Let's extend this idea to something else that burns: another's anger. When you allow yourself to get close to another's anger and then get burned, you withdraw. Then you feel, "I'm not dealing with this well." So, you step back in again; the other is still angry and you feel burned again, so you withdraw again.

Can you see that the emotional nerve endings are getting burned and frozen, that liking and disliking are arising? Can you see that all of this is perfectly normal in a human and just let it go, just watch yourself without owning all these feelings? You bring in so many judgments: "I should be able to tolerate their anger" or "I shouldn't have to tolerate their anger"; "He's wrong"; "I'm wrong"; "Who's bad, who's good?" When you bring in all those judgments and duality, there is turmoil, suffering and confusion. Then there is somebody doing all of this. It is that "somebodyness" that catches you. In "comfort/discomfort," "like" and "dislike," there is not necessarily "somebody." But in strong attachment or aversion there is a very big "somebody."

J: It's almost like by not forgiving ourselves and feeling what we are feeling, we are clinging to those feelings and can not move on.

L: There is another dimension, though, when you have a major loss. I think of when I got divorced, that wasn't just a day to day type of thing, it lasted a long time. It kind of went into another dimension of feeling that had a lot more depth to it.

Barbara: I'm paraphrasing Aaron who is saying that grief is very different. Grief is one of the emotions that is not based on fear. There's anger in grief that is based on fear, but grief itself is not based on fear. Grief is as connected to love as to fear.

Aaron: Let us consider J's response, that it comes down to not forgiving yourself. One of the things that we need to ask is why we are so hard on ourselves. As you get to be older souls and closer to graduation from this plane you become more demanding of yourselves. You become more and more perfectionist, not only out of fear, but because you truly aspire to purity. This process is so common we have a tongue-in-cheek name for it, "old soul syndrome." You see glimpses of the perfection that is real in yourselves and so you become impatient with yourselves, asking, "Why can't I manifest that in myself all the time? I want to manifest my energy more purely because I don't want to hurt people and I aspire to be loving. I aspire to touch the world with clear energy and not with fear and pain."

There is much beauty in that aspiration, but it doesn't leave room for the fact that you are human. As long as you are incarnate you are never going to manifest your energy with perfect purity; it cannot be done. This is your opportunity to practice compassion for the human that you are. I'm not saying don't try. I'm certainly not suggesting you turn your back on suffering and say, "It's not my responsibility, I can't help it." But be aware that you are going to make mistakes.

If you can not love yourselves when you make mistakes, how can you love another? For those of you who are old souls, and that goes for everyone in this room, at this point in your journey the most important lesson you have to learn is to find compassion for the humans that you are. Until you can do that, your compassion is marred. You can not move past judgment of others until you can move past judgment of yourself. One of you is asking, "Why can't it work the other way?" Because it's easier to forgive others than to forgive yourself. You are the final place of learning for yourself. Once you've really forgiven yourself, there is nothing left to forgive.

There is another part to this issue. One of fear. All of you have heard an inner voice asking, at some time or another, "I don't know if I'm ready to be that responsible." If somebody else is saying things that are making you angry, saying things that are hurting you, what does forgiveness and non-judgment mean in that case? To forgive does not mean to give in to another's inappropriate demands.

Why is so hard to say "no" to another? One reason is that you do aspire to be loving, as I have just discussed, but sometimes misunderstand what "loving" means. But another reason it is so hard is that, at some level, you realize that while it is more loving to say no, it also takes much more responsibility, and makes you vulnerable to a different kind of pain, because in saying no to another you are saying no to whatever negative, co-dependent patterns you have set up with that person. In saying no, you are saying to yourself: I will not allow myself to be involved in this dishonesty, fear, or whatever the pattern may be, anymore.

That assertion takes a tremendous amount of courage. I'm not talking about large scale co-dependent patterns, such as drug or alcohol abuse, I'm talking about somebody who is sometimes rude to you. Just something little like that. A friend who is always late for lunch. When do you say no? How have you allowed yourself to be a part of that pattern of behavior? When you say no to it, you are making the affirmation, "I am worthwhile, as are you. I am going to treat us both with respect."

For some of you that is terrifying. If you treat yourself with respect, are you ready to always treat yourself with respect? Can you treat yourself with respect and still be self-critical and self-judgmental? In the past those patterns have protected you. When you heap self judgment on yourself it is a way out of facing the reality of your relative, human imperfection, a way out of needing to find forgiveness for that imperfection. The angel in you is perfect, the human can not be perfect.

You want so badly to be perfect, but you can't be. Respect says, "I am human. I will try with all my heart, my mind and my soul. But I can't be perfect and I accept that. I forgive myself and love myself despite my humanness, even because of my humanness."

When you say no to another it must either come from that place of self respect or from a place of anger. If you've determined that you're not going to let it come from a place of anger, grown past that, then what do you do with that anger? It's easy to say no from a place of anger. But you know that there is no love in that. When you say no from a place of self respect, what does it ask you to give up? What defenses? What prior notions of yourself? This, then, is another reason why you cling to not forgiving yourself, cling to old, fearful patterns.

(Barbara: While cleaning up typos in this transcript, I asked Aaron to elaborate on what he had said above. He talks about multiple motivations, and only those from a place of self creating unwholesome, adhering karma. How do we say "no" without being somebody saying no? Also, can you talk more about the "terror" of being responsible? What follows was channeled at the computer.)

Aaron: I understand your question. Yes, there are multiple motivations. There is that in you which aspires to love, deeply wishes to be worthy of the divine which you experience within and without. There is also that in you which has learned old patterns of fear and reactivity to that fear as a means of self protection. It is not useful to say that "self" isn't real. Ultimately it's not, and wisdom may cut through the delusion, but fear and wisdom cannot work simultaneously in the human. This is not to say that the fearful person cannot hear the voice of wisdom; the fearful person who is unmindful, owning his/her fear and caught in it, cannot hear the voice of wisdom.

When you are thus caught, then, you must first work within the confines of this relative reality, where there is experience of a self feeling fear, and perhaps greed, anger or other emotions.

Here is where judgment sets in for the old soul who says, "I shouldn't feel this or that." With that judgment, self further solidifies, making it all the more impossible to break through into the wisdom mind that knows the whole story is built on the delusion of fear.

Here is where, with practice, you learn to recognize fear, to know with mindfulness, "Fear is present in me." Just that knowing frees you from slavery to the fear. Fear is NOT bad, nor is it good. It simply is. Fear can become a catalyst for anger, hatred or greed, or a catalyst for compassion. I would choose not to repeat what is already available in transcript, so I will not elaborate on this idea. (See "Anger as a Catalyst to Compassion," in the book Aaron, page 47.)

Then your anger, fear, greed or other emotion is no longer seen as that which you must be rid of in order to be "pure" but is seen as that which nourishes pure awareness. There is no garbage within you, only that which can best be utilized by turning it into compost. Awareness is the catalyst that makes compost from muck.

As you learn this lesson, you begin to see that it was easier to "own" your heavy emotions and blame the self, strive to be rid of them, than to become responsible for converting them, which involves both honesty and compassion.

Your past patterns have been to protect the self from pain by playing along with the dishonesty, in terms of finding someone to blame—yourself. That was easier than the honesty of saying, "I will offer compassion to this being in pain." Can you

see how that works? You want to be compassionate, but that's somebody being compassionate. To allow compassion to flow through you is to drop the ego-identification with the whole story. Then who/what is left? Very scary. It leads to that question, "What am I trying to do, annihilate myself?"

As you offer compassion to the being thus caught, it is here that you may shift from horizontal to vertical practice. Without the identification of self and ownership of the emotions, wisdom can cut through to know there is BOTH pain, and nobody ultimately involved in that pain. No one to get rid of, nothing to get rid of, but on the relative plane, still a need for compassion which flows unrestricted from the open heart.

Does that answer your question?

Barbara: Enough for now. Thank you, Aaron.

(Continuing from original transcript.)

Aaron: We are identifying a lot of situations that need your loving attention. Now it would be useful to get down to the basic question: how do we work with this? When you want to say no, and do it from a place of respect, but are afraid, how do you work with these confused emotions? Last week we spoke about the horizontal and the vertical in your spiritual practice, the horizontal being that which deals with relative reality and the vertical being that which deals with ultimate reality. At this point you are able to see the difficulty in responding with respect, and have compassion rather than judgment for the human caught in that difficulty. But it has become a vicious circle. You don't know how to respond with respect because when somebody abuses you anger arises and you get caught in it. Then you need to shift to the vertical practice, allowing wisdom to cut through the thought or emotion.

I want to pause here. There are a few questions. We will come back to that space where the horizontal and vertical intersect and talk about the specifics of D's question, "How do I work with this?"

Barbara: *(Reading G's question.)* Can we use both the positive and negative to guide us to more harmony and a greater understanding of the guidance that all things, positive and negative, are providing to us and that we are providing to all things? Isn't it all just helping guidance, "good" or "bad"? It's not personal but, rather, mutual, isn't it? All one thing uplifting itself by interaction of its parts. Is this an understanding of your message?

Aaron: We're cutting through it all here. There is no good or bad, positive or negative, so you have to use both. Why do you fall into the judgment, "This is positive, this is negative"?

Do you know the story of the man whose horses got loose? When he found his barn empty his neighbors all said, "Oh, what bad luck. Too bad." He just shook his head and said, "Bad luck, good luck, who knows?" The next day the horses came back, and they brought with them a wild horse, a very beautiful and strong animal. His neighbors looked and said, "What good luck." He shrugged and said, "Bad luck, good luck, who knows?" His son was attempting to brush this new horse and it kicked the boy, and broke his leg. "What bad luck," his neighbors said. Again he shrugged, "Bad luck, good

luck, who knows?" This was in a country where armies came through and conscripted men to fight. They came and took all the young men in the town, except this one with the broken leg. Good luck, bad luck; it's all part of each other.

When you stop fighting with what happens in your life, stop labeling it good or bad and just be with it, knowing that there is discomfort if there is discomfort, seeing the fear that is arising if fear is arising, being aware in each moment of what you are experiencing, then you stop owning the happenings in your life. They stop controlling you. You just sit back and watch it, knowing that some of it is uncomfortable and some of it is comfortable.

At this point we are no longer feeling it's "my" experience. You let go of "good" and "bad" and relax. Then you start to be able to greet it with love rather than fear. Even love and fear are not a duality. We are not trying to get rid of fear and hold on to love. This is part of the misunderstanding that I see here tonight. We're not trying to get rid of heavy emotions and bring in loving emotions, we're not trying to get rid of fear. We are simply trying to learn to relate to all of it, the anger, the pain, the jealousy, the fear, with compassionate loving kindness and patience. With endurance even; not an endurance that says, "I will tolerate this no matter what," but an endurance that just waits, that allows itself to be vulnerable and open.

This is the core of it—keeping the walls around the heart open—seeing each time that walls are built, and letting them all dissolve again. When you build them again, notice it and let them dissolve again.

The dissolution of the walls is the place where the horizontal and vertical practices intersect. You must work with awareness, compassion and patience, seeing these walls constantly built from the desire to protect yourself from pain. Simultaneously, on the ultimate reality level, you must know that there is nobody to protect, and there never was. But unless there is also the relative reality practice of compassion, of constantly reopening your heart from your pain, the ultimate reality becomes merely another kind of defense, a place of escape. Then the statement, "There is nobody to protect" becomes a way of disassociating with your pain. There may be nobody to protect, but the pain is very real.

There is a wonderful story of a Zen master whose son was just killed in an accident. He is sitting and weeping when one of his students walks in and, seeing the master, is a bit shocked. He asks, "Why are you crying? You tell us over and over that it's all an illusion." The Zen master says, "Yes. And the loss of a child is the most painful illusion of all."

When we do not live in denial of our pain, we learn to embrace even the pain, while deepening awareness that there is no self experiencing it. Compassion is what allows us to move deep enough into the experience of our true self, the Christ or Buddha mind, the God self, the angel, to begin to experience non-separation. That doesn't mean that there is no pain, but there is no longer ownership of the pain. That Zen master grieved on one level for the son that he loved, and on another level he grieved for all the human loss of all that we love. This is not a path of freedom from pain, but a path of freedom from suffering—freedom from the suffering that grows with our ownership of experience, our separation into "my pain," our resistance to that pain and our grasping at painlessness. Then you are suffering.

I am reminded here of one of Barbara's children when he was very young. His older brother threw a ball, not meaning to hit him, but it did hit the child. He came in the house crying, "He hit me with the ball." Barbara hugged him and put some ice on the place he said hurt. After a few minutes it was obvious that it didn't hurt anymore. She was touching him and he wasn't pulling back; there was no sensitivity there. But he was still pointing his finger and saying, "He hit me with the ball; it's not fair." There was no more physical pain, but he was suffering because of his anger and desire to place blame for his discomfort.

Can you see the places where you are owning your pain and how it creates suffering? It is a very hard path to walk. There is a very fine line between compassion for yourself on the relative level, and maudlin compassion, ownership. Watch yourself feeling that pain, watch yourself get into "It shouldn't have happened, it's not fair," all of those protests. And smile at that pained being as you would with your own child. Hold yourself, figuratively or even literally, in your arms. Give yourself comfort. While on another level, you see through it. It's just another cloud passing through, just another experience. Each time you come back to that awareness you cut through this relative reality. Because you are never going to get free as long as you stay in relative reality. But you are also never going to get free if you dwell only in ultimate reality, because the relative reality is your teacher. You've got to stay in that point where they intersect, seeing both at once.

Barbara: We are returning to the specific questions. (*Reading question.*) Because of my depression, I am not able to go into deep sleep or meditation. How can I get back in control of my mind?

Aaron: Depression is such a hard thing to work with because of the way it grips at you and destroys your faith. You feel the pain of it and within that pain you so easily forget who you are. You lose touch with that angel, that divinity, within you, and deepen into a "self" who owns the depression. The further afield you go from that sense of your divinity, the more the depression deepens.

I sense in your question, when you say, "How can I get back in control of my mind?" that a part of you wants to clamp down on the depression. But I think that what you need to do is very different. You already are in control of your mind if you are aware that you are depressed and that you need to work with it. You can not make the decision, my dear one, to get rid of depression. Depression is not a solid object. It is a building of walls that cuts you off from the light. Depression is not your natural state. Your natural state is lightness, peacefulness and openness; a connection with the light.

If your approach is how to get rid of your depression, it just becomes another fight. Doing so can temporarily pull you out of depression because it gives you a sense of something to do: you can fight with it. But this is just moving from one type of desperation to another. Instead of being depressed, you're getting rid of, hating and being at war with it.

When you really look at the depression, you start to find the human who is feeling pain and fear and who is judging itself, saying, "I should be beyond this. I should be able to move through this more skillfully," instead of saying, "It hurts." When you can offer yourself comfort and a bit of compassion for your pain, then you start to touch the divinity in yourself. That loving kindness pokes holes in the dark wall of depression and

lets light come through. You focus not on getting rid of the depression, but on reconnecting yourself to love.

There are two specific tools that I will offer. One is working with a simple lovingkindness meditation. I believe that you are familiar with this practice. Usually we begin with the self, but when there is deep depression and anger at the self, it helps to reverse the process. Begin with someone for whom you feel love. Just think of them and offer them your love. Offer wishes for their well-being: "May you be at peace. May you find joy. May you be healed." Whatever you wish for them. Then gently let them move out of your consciousness and bring yourself in. Can you wish yourself the same things?

Sometimes in that offering there is deeper access to the pain that you are feeling and which you have had to push away. Depression grows out of resistance to pain. It grows out of unidentified anger with the pain, and a sense of helpless victimization by pain. Trust that you can allow yourself to feel your pain without needing to move off into depression, to stay afloat with that pain, not to sink into it and become mired in it. Simply know that this is terribly painful and open your heart to that pain. This is part of where that lovingkindness meditation can take you.

Another practice that, perhaps, you have done with us in that past is a relative of a Tibetan practice called Tonglen. Traditionally in this practice you visualize light and breathe it in through the crown of your head and then breathe it out to some other person or place in the world where there is suffering. Then you visualize that suffering as a heavy, black, tarry mass. Breathe it in through the heart, allowing yourself to hold it in your heart for a breath. Breathe it in, exhale and let it rest there; inhale, seeing the intention to release it. Exhale and release it to God, to the universe, to whatever. Breathe in light. Let it rest in the heart center while you exhale. Inhale again with intention to release it, and then send it out to where there is suffering. That is traditional practice.

What I want you to do with this is to visualize yourself as the object of suffering, so, there will be two parts of you. There is this centered part, which does the meditation, and the hurting, frightened part. Be a channel within this highest self of you. Bring in light and send it out to the part of you that is suffering. Then draw in the pain of that suffering, the heaviness of it, and be a channel for its release, knowing that you don't have to carry it. You don't have to own it. This is not disassociation from it; quite the reverse. You must open fully to the pain, to transcend it. But you no longer feel helpless in the face of pain. This practice gives you a very specific way of releasing it, and of offering love to it.

Barbara: (*Reading L's question.*) I still feel guilty and somewhat frightened when I say "no" to a loved one. Does this change?

Aaron: Everything changes. The thing is, my friend, that sometimes it's going to change to be more comfortable and sometimes it's going to change to be more uncomfortable. Sometimes you're going to feel better about saying "no" and sometimes you're going to feel worse about saying "no." Instead of getting into a war with the guilt that you feel, can you just be present with the guilt, but not own the guilt? Just, "seeing guilt."

Can you allow the experience of feeling the turmoil and not liking it? Feel the anger towards yourself and towards the catalyst for the situation, because the guilt is so

uncomfortable. Just watch it all. How much it solidifies self, this wanting to be guilt free. Can it be okay if there is guilt?

As soon as it is okay that there is guilt, then there is a place of self respect. Then you are acknowledging your feelings without judgment. On the relative level there is guilt, but on the ultimate level there is no judgment. "It's okay that there is guilt; I'm allowed to feel guilt, I'm allowed to feel angry." When you're free of reactivity to the anger and the guilt, there's just guilt. There is nothing special you have to do about it; no need to get rid of it. Just a sense of self respect that allows you to feel whatever is present in your emotional body at that moment.

With that drawing in of the light, of self respect and kindness, the sense of respect to the self and the other deepens. The place where the "no" is becomes clearer. While it may hurt the other to hear that "no," it is offered with love and not with anger or fear. If anger or fear were there, that's okay. It reconnects you to the respect and loving kindness which are an equal basis for the "no." It helps you to acknowledge that fear is not the full basis for the "no," even if it's part of it. Each time you do this you become a bit more comfortable with the guilt.

After a while you are so comfortable with it that you don't need it anymore, and then it dissolves, not because you set out to dissolve it, because you'll never dissolve it by trying to get rid of it. It dissolves simply because you don't need it anymore. Your "no" comes from a clear space of respect for self and for the other. Does that answer your question? (Yes.)

Barbara: G says he did not mean to emphasize positive and negative, he meant to say that all experiences and processes are guidance, are they not? Aaron is suggesting that I talk about that.

Yes, absolutely they are. Yet we do get into the negative and positive. As humans everything is guidance but we don't want to have to learn through the painful processes. It is much more pleasant through the non-painful. Aaron keeps saying that we don't have to learn with pain; pain is saying, "Pay attention." If we pay attention, we learn. If we can learn to pay attention without the pain then we don't need the pain.

What he is suggesting I talk about briefly in answer to this is something that I have been thinking about for a couple of weeks. I was just at a conference where people were talking about the misuse of authority and high position as related to sexual abuse. People at the conference were talking about their pain and expressing a lot of deep held pain and fear.

The issue seemed to polarize. Some people said, "Those in authority must be more responsible; this is totally unethical. Look at all the pain it is causing." Some people said, "If this (person in authority) is said to be (highly aware), can we trust that he/she knows what they're doing in leading the student into sexual relationship, and was not acting for self-centered reasons—that the student really needed that experience?"

I found myself hearing both sides of it, and both sides made some sense. But I felt very angry about it because nobody should be subjected to that kind of abuse. I've been talking to Aaron about it a lot in the past two weeks and I'm starting to see that both views are true and they don't contradict each other.

If people are karmically in a situation where they need to experience certain things, they will find a way to experience them. Simultaneously, even if the teacher is enlightened and acting from the best of motives, nobody should deliberately need to cause pain to another person or their "enlightenment" doesn't make sense. We see that there is enough pain in the world so that we don't have to create pain for people for them to learn. We just steer them to the existing pain.

So, I think what I'm saying is, all experiences and processes are guidance, but it's perfectly okay to prefer the non-painful, and it's not okay to cause pain to another person under the guise of teaching them something—like a parent who hits a child and says, "He's got to learn." There are loving ways to teach and hurtful ways to teach. With each form of "instruction" there is a multiplicity of lessons. What are we really teaching when we harm another, even from the highest motivation? Is it what we want to teach?

When we seek to learn through hurtful ways, we can learn from that hurt, but it is much more comfortable to learn without the hurt. So how can we allow ourselves to more fully enter into life's situations where we don't have to learn through being hurt, where our lives have a lot more positive and a lot less negative? Are there some thoughts about that? In what ways do we invite the painful situations?

G: I think that when you are more mindful and paying close attention you can learn from positive experiences. But, if you are being closed it may take pain to pull you out.

Barbara: It may take the shock of pain to say, "Hey, pay attention." How do we unlearn that pattern? We do sometimes unconsciously choose pain because it is what we need to finally penetrate into what's really happening.

G: Mindfulness.

Aaron: Again, the distinction between pain and suffering. Pain is a given in human form. There is going to be some pain. You can not learn from your pain when you are waging war with it. When you can see yourself waging war, see how much aversion there is to the pain, can you just let go and say, "Okay, now I'm going to experience this pain." Then you start to be able to learn from it. That is the first kindness; just to say no more war. It opens the door to more and more kindness, until you slowly become able to shift the pattern from needing pain in order to deepen awareness to being able to maintain deep awareness without the catalyst of pain. It's one of the glitches of being human. Something that seems to be built into the human being is that it falls asleep when there is no pain.

Eventually you may get to the point where you can remind yourself that if you stop paying attention, things are going to get painful, and that if you can keep paying attention, then things don't need to get painful. I don't want to suggest holding a dangling sword over your head, a threat of pain that's going to come and slice your head off if you don't watch out, because that's just another way of living with fear. Instead, can you ask yourself, why am I using pain as a catalyst for being aware? Can joy, peace, contentment and connection become just as much as a catalyst? Part of that is simply habit and self-discipline; you really can teach yourself to pay attention without pain.

Barbara: (*Reading J's question.*) How do I proceed in working towards spiritual growth?

Aaron: We're going to have a weekend full of that topic. (*A weekend workshop.*) If I could sum it up in one word it would be awareness, awareness, awareness. Everything we've been talking about tonight is part of spiritual growth. The most important thing is that you see "spiritual" as inherent in every experience of your life. It is not something outside of this moment towards which you must strive. It is not something to be grasped at or attained.

What is spiritual growth? You're already perfect on one level. I call you angels in earthsuits. What you are working towards is a harmony between the angel and the earthsuits. We call that spiritual growth but that term can be misleading because people think of something outside of them which they have to bring into them. But everything that you ever needed to know is already there. Spiritual growth does not entail growth of the spirit body or angel which is already perfect, but the bringing of the other bodies into harmony with the spiritual body. It is awareness that helps you draw the connections so that the deep wisdom that's already within you starts to manifest in your works, acts and thoughts, thereby harmonizing the angels and the earthsuits. This finally leads us back to D's basic question. I wonder if we could read it again.

Barbara: (*Reading D's question.*) One line is: "Aaron has said there is really no need to protect because there is no separate self." I'm paraphrasing Aaron who is saying, "But that's on the ultimate level. Can you see that you need to do both?"

Aaron: Can you see that you need to act with kindness and respect to this seemingly separate self on the relative level, a kindness and respect which asks it to acknowledge and smile to its fear? You do this work with all the support practices that we've talked about. But there is also need to acknowledge that there is no separate self and that the fear is an illusion. Both are true. It's a question of balance. You're a tightrope walker. If you lean a little too far to the right or left you fall off. You've got to stay on this thin line, working very mindfully with whatever heavy emotions arise: with courage, with compassion and with kindness.

At the same time you use the sword of wisdom to cut through the illusion of separate self and external object of fear. Mindfulness practice repeated over and over, and working with compassion with all that arises, will deepen the wisdom. But no matter how sharp that knife of wisdom gets, it's useless unless you pick it up and use it each time a thought arises that says, "Self; anger; fear; jealousy; I want this; I don't like that." Instead of ownership or getting rid of the thought, ask: "What is this thought? Where did it come from?"

You will see the illusion of self from which thought arose, not just as an academic seeing, but you will experience it. You'll see how you get caught in it over and over. When you touch it with the awareness that it's just a scratch on the record repeating itself again and again and again, old habit, old mind consciousness, it self-destructs. There is a brief moment then where there is no thought. Nothing to be grasped at, nothing to be pushed away. You enter, even if very briefly, into the experience of emptiness of self and of deep connection. You rest for that moment in pure mind, in your perfection. And then a new thought arises and you do it all again. Mindfulness sharpens the sword, but the sword must be picked up and cut through the illusion over and over. And when the thought dissolves, awareness must know: "This is pure mind." We have awareness aware of awareness.

Eventually you move away from the habit of identifying yourself as “me.” There’s still a “me” that has to take out the garbage and brush the dog, but there is no ownership of that “me.” There is much more looseness, more space for some of it to be pleasant and some of it to be unpleasant, with no pushing away or grasping. It’s a kind of mind training that eventually re-associates your mind into who you really are, not all the ideas you’ve had about who you thought you were.

The more you rest in that space of who you really are, the more you know that is what’s real. You’ve avoided that, all of you. You keep wanting to be somebody, and in that grasping at somebody you forget who you really are. It’s rather ironic that when you finally understand who you really are, that’s when you become somebody—but that somebody is nobody. Somebody because it’s connected to all that is, manifesting the full empowerment of your being, the full expression of the totality of you. Somebody indeed! The pure reflection of God Itself. But there’s nobody in it, in terms of no concepts. Nobody to prove anything or make anything happen. Just complete resting in that peace that knows its divinity and connection.

Barbara: We are addressing the last part of D’s question: “Part of my motive for doing this can be to get rid of the emotion, rather than transcend it through the wisdom and/or experience of this ultimate illusion. Will Aaron address how best to use this information concerning the illusion of self that he is giving us?”

Aaron: This is again that fine place of balance. You see your grasping at the non-separate, at ultimate reality, see the act of cutting through the illusion of self as a way to avoid pain. Seeing that, can you go back and acknowledge the pain? There is great anger, or hurt, or whatever there may be. Can you see the antipathy to the pain, and the desire to push it away or escape it? See the desire to use concept of ultimate reality, not experience but concept, as a way to distance yourself from the pain.

(Tape ended. Rephrased by Aaron for transcript.)

As long as there is concept, you are NOT experiencing pure mind/ultimate reality, only dodging pain with the pretense of ultimate reality. When you allow the experience of that pain and drop the fight with it, “somebodyness” dissolves and also the conceptualizer. Then the experience of ultimate reality moves in, truly cutting through delusion and allowing the momentary emergence of wisdom mind.

Each time you rest in that pure mind, you are home. There is clear awareness that in that moment there is nothing else needed, nothing to do. Each thought or emotion becomes another opportunity to practice. Fear of painful experience drops as identification with, or ownership of, the experience shatters.

When you have rested in that space of pure mind often enough to stabilize the experience, you will cease to allow yourself to use the pretense of it as escape. This will not grow out of judgment which says “shouldn’t” but openhearted compassion which allows full human experience with equanimity. It is that place of perfect balance of wisdom and compassion, relative and ultimate.

Have I sufficiently answered your question? (Yes.) That is all.

Wednesday, September 29, 1993

A brief opening question: Last week Aaron stopped the channeling when the first side of the tape was near the end (*Aaron usually pauses and says "Please turn the tape" about 30 seconds before the tape ends.*), yet at the end of the evening he did not stop when the second side ran out, and some of his talk was not recorded. How does he decide what to have recorded and what to let go unrecorded?

Aaron: I am Aaron. Good evening and my love to all of you. A quick answer to this question. This machinery of yours gives off a different energy as it approaches the end of the tape. The tape leader pulls a bit harder and I have learned to distinguish it. It's hard to phrase the difference in words. It's not that the machine is working any harder; it is not offering any special noise or static. The energy is simply different when the bulk of the tape is on the leading spool or when it's on the take-up spool. What fools me sometimes is when Barbara uses a tape other than this standard length, because different lengths of tape give out different energy.

Last week, on the second side, I simply felt that what I was saying for those last few minutes did not need to be recorded. I didn't pause to have you put in a new tape because I knew I was going to finish very shortly. I can easily fill in on the transcript if it seems necessary. Sometimes I stop, sometimes I don't stop. This is especially true with private work. If there is a chain of thought and people are deeply involved in that thought, it often seems more important to finish the thought and allow people to move fully into the experience of it than to capture the words on the tape, which, after all, are only words. I am much more interested in the experience than the concept. So as you move from the words into an experiential understanding, I don't want to break the mood. On the other hand, if what I am talking about is still in the conceptual level, then there is no break for people when I say, "The tape needs to be turned." Does that answer your question? That is all.

Aaron's talk

I am Aaron. This weekend's workshop revolved around the question: what is the spiritual path and how do we live it? Since we spoke for some 10 to 15 hours, I am in no way planning to summarize it. You all will read it in transcript form, if you wish to, thanks to our transcriber. What I want to do is pick up on a specific issue raised in the workshop that we did not have time to fully investigate, and explore it a bit. We began to talk about this subject two weeks ago here—the intersection of relative and ultimate reality and the ways in which you may learn to rest in that curve where they intersect. Not only ways which you may learn to rest in that intersection, but in which the whole focus of your work is coming to rest in that spot.

When I last spoke of this (*Private session, not transcribed.*) I talked about Christian and Buddhist paths as well as relative and ultimate reality. Very briefly, I said that the Judeo-Christian path, and especially the Christian path, has a focus of love, of openhearted compassion, forgiveness and loving kindness. Of course, this same focus is part of the Buddhist path. And wisdom is part of the Christian path. But the Christian path is a bit more weighted towards faith and loving kindness. The Buddhist path tends to be a bit

more weighted towards wisdom, developing the wisdom mind that penetrates the delusion of permanent self, penetrates through ignorance, and does not anchor there.

Wisdom must be tempered by loving kindness and compassion. Compassion becomes maudlin and can not lead you to liberation without the insights offered by deeper wisdom. I spoke at the workshop of why I feel these paths so beautifully blend together for those of you who have no need to cling to the identity of one or the other. In a similar vein, your work in the everyday world, living your life with constant awareness, helps you to deal more lovingly and skillfully with relative reality. You learn not to be reactive to that which is flung at you. You are changing the old mind patterns.

We have talked about this in depth. I'm going to speak to you here as the small group that you are, who are all knowledgeable about what I'm saying. Some of you have studied dependent origination in depth with me. Others of you are at least familiar with this doctrine. We've talked here about karma many times. You're familiar with how you either continue old patterns or how you may move to the bare perception of what's happening and find some freedom from patterns. But if there is a self doing this, that's just the creation of a new habit—a more skillful habit, perhaps; one that allows you to relate more lovingly to the world, and that's fine—But there is still somebody doing this. As long as there is somebody doing it, you are trapped.

Any word, action or thought that grows from a sense of self creates karma. It may create wholesome karma, which brings happiness or the arising of more joyful and peaceful new conditions and phenomena. But there is still karma, because there is still somebody doing. Because your life becomes more spacious and there is more joy, stillness and peace, and because reactivity drops away, this path of relative reality practice of generosity, loving kindness, patience, truthfulness and mindfulness will eventually lead to arising of wisdom. But it can be a very slow path. That's okay; we're not in a rush. By the use of such mind practices we use mind to tame mind. Mind can get very out of bounds: owning, controlling, fearing, waging war, worrying, fixing. We observe that tempestuous mind and relate to it more skillfully.

Mindfulness uses mind to observe what is happening. I do not need to relate to this group the ways in which that creates more space in around the arising of phenomena, but there is still somebody to whom it's happening and someone observing it.

Then we make the shift to the wisdom mind. Let's call that vertical practice. The wisdom mind is a sword cutting through delusion. With the arising of any thought, emotion or physical sensation, we ask, "Where is it coming from? Who is experiencing it?" You will begin to see the ways in which it is old mind pattern—just old mind conditioned to respond in set ways. As wisdom penetrates into that reality and sees how that thought or emotion has arisen, "Poof!" it loses its substance and disappears. Then there is a moment of stillness, a moment of coming home. For that moment there is only pure awareness, with nobody there, no observer. That watcher that we've looked at so often disappears.

Pure awareness may only last a second until the next arising. That arising may be thought, "Oh, there's nobody here." Whose thought is that? Where did it arise from? It is old mind needing to fill in the gaps, as it always has. Let it go. Poof! Stillness, again. I don't mean to emphasize stillness. Stillness and occurrence are the same thing, just part of the flow. What I speak of is not stillness as the non-arising of phenomena, but

stillness that transcends arising and dissolving. Stillness beyond stillness or occurrence. Do you understand that? We use the word "stillness" as your language has no specific term for this awareness. It's the place where you no longer own that thought, sensation or emotion. There is simply nobody home, just mind running its show. Pure awareness rests in itself. That pure awareness can get to be a stable place of resting. Slowly, you move into something that is not simply reconditioning of the relative reality, but is true wisdom.

Now I want to take this one step further. Because your lives are filled with pain, turmoil, fear, suffering, there is a very natural desire to defend, to protect. Using wisdom mind in this way one can fall into the seeming discordance of seeing clearly and yet feeling pain. One is then at risk of saying, "I shouldn't feel pain, it's an illusion." But the pain is undeniably there! On the other hand, one can keep finding space for the pain, space for the fear, the turmoil and suffering, and continue forever to be someone making space. Remember that they intersect. Either one will eventually lead you to freedom, because either must eventually lead you to the experience of the other. But, when you can rest in that intersection, that is your most viable path. That's really what all of our work is about—heart centered practice of deepening compassion combined with skillful, loving, living on a moment to moment, day to day, basis and non-identification with/non-ownership of all of those experiences. How do we bring it together?

What I'm doing here tonight is laying the groundwork for something that I want to go into deeply in the coming months. Basically, we've got a giant toolbox. Most of you are familiar with some of the tools that you may use. The skill with which you walk the spiritual path depends upon how wisely you can choose from those tools. Part of the value of having a skilled meditation teacher is that that being can better guide you into the right tool at the right moment. But, you do not always have a teacher beside you. The ideal use of a teacher is to help you learn to choose the tools yourself. When is one getting lost in maudlin emotionalism? Why? Is there defense, pushing away the wisdom mind because of fear of this whole experience of emptiness of self? When is one clinging to the wisdom mind? Is it a refuge from pain? Is there burying of the pain with, "I shouldn't, because I know better." This doesn't really rid us of pain at all, but only denies it.

I want to end here simply with the story which some of you have heard before. A Zen master whose son had died was crying. One of his disciples came into the room, saw him crying and said, "Why are you crying? You've told us it's all illusion." The Zen master said, "Yes. And the loss of a child is the most painful illusion of all."

We speak here often of non-duality, of moving away from a dual vision of good or evil, worthiness or unworthiness, of any of these seeming opposites. We speak of the fact that one must act in accordance with moral values, not because it's evil to harm another and good not to harm another, but because one must simply always act in whatever ways one can to alleviate suffering where it exists and to avoid creating suffering. It's not a question of good or evil, but a question of our total relationship with all that is. When you harm another, you harm yourself.

We speak of love and fear. Some of you come to understand those as if they were opposite poles, but basically all of your acts, words and thoughts are conditioned by love. No, I'm not contradicting myself. When you act in a way that is self serving and

ignores the needs of others because there is a fear that you will be hurt or that your needs won't be met, you are acting out of a sense of love for this one part of the totality of all that is. There is simply the delusion that says this part is separate. But you're still acting from love, only love which acts from the delusion of separate self.

From where does that delusion grow? Here again we come to relative and ultimate practice. We work with looking at the arising of fear, seeing the old mind conditioning, and creating new and more skillful ways of relating. We also must work at seeing the delusion itself. There is nothing to be afraid of, nothing to hurt you, because there is nothing separate from you. And yet, undeniably, if you walk into the highway and a car hits you, you can be killed. Ultimate reality and relative reality are not separate. I want you to come to see the ways that relative reality rests in ultimate reality, to know when you've got more weight on the relative foot or when you've got more weight on the ultimate foot, and stand with your weight balanced.

I thank you for your attention to my thoughts. I will be glad to answer questions about what I've said. These are simply thoughts that grow out of the weekend workshop. However, many there did not have the meditation background many of you have, so it did not feel appropriate to take it this deep in that setting. That is all.

I am Aaron. With apologies to those of you who were at the workshop I'm going to repeat the instructions that I gave you as homework. Let's do this as a guided meditation. This is somewhat related to what the Tibetans call sky yoga.

Meditation

(Leaving pauses between sentences, as indicated by dots (...) in the first paragraph.)

First, breathe out, follow your breath ... Just follow it out as far as it will go ... Does it stop anywhere? ... This is best done outdoors, looking at the sky. Since we're indoors, I ask you to simply visualize the sky ... Does the breath stop at the end of the earth's atmosphere? ... Are there any boundaries out there? ...

Focus only on the exhalation ... Breathe out and watch your breath move outward from you ... Out to the ends of the universe, if there could be an end. Out and out and out. Focusing on the exhale. Follow your breath out ... Visualize the sky that's just outside these windows ... No limits, no boundaries.

Now move your attention to the in breath. What are you drawing into yourself? Where does it come from? Yes, it's the air closest to your mouth and nostrils, but where does it come from? Is it not also that air beyond the universe? Breathing the whole universe into yourself with each breath, and then letting it go out again. With every breath the entire universe moves through you.

Is your skin solid? Certainly it holds in the blood, the bones and the muscles. But it's made up of millions of molecules. It's porous. Does your energy stop at the skin? It radiates out. Does outside energy stop at your skin? It radiates in. You are a flow-through, interconnected with all that is.

Where does a thought come from? If the air that you breathe comes from the whole universe and if the energy that moves into you comes from the whole universe, can you claim a thought as yours? What is an original thought? I'm not saying that there is no such a thing as an original thought, but even if it originates in this mind that you call your mind, do you own it? What happens when you share it with a neighbor? It's just more of this stuff that's recirculating: air, energy, thoughts.

(Longer pause.)

What is an emotion? Some combination, perhaps, of thought and energy. We won't try to define it. I only want you to see that you don't own it. We have said here many times that it is not that which arises that creates your suffering, but your relationship to that which arises, most specifically, your sense of ownership of it—your fixation on it—your attachment or aversion to it. So we train ourselves to make space, but that is mere training, until we move fully into the experience of our interconnectedness.

I want you to take this to a second level; another step. As you sit here, whatever thought, emotion or physical sensation arises, I want you to touch it with the questions, "Where did it come from, where is it now and where is it going?" First, see what answers you come up with. Second, as you ask the question, see what happens to the thought. While you do this asking, if the thought, emotion, image or sensation dissolves when you touch it with awareness, just rest in that space where thought dissolves, where awareness becomes aware of awareness itself. There's nobody being aware, only pure awareness. Just rest there. There's nothing to get rid of; whatever arose self-destructs, self-liberates. Each time a new thought arises, it's another chance to practice.

If only one thought arose every ten minutes and the rest of the time you stayed in this space of non-occurrence, it would be easy to get attached to that stillness and think

that the stillness was who you really were. When thoughts continue to arise with increasing rapidity, and you touch them each time with this analytic "Where did it come from?" see them go "poof," and then rest in that space, you then move past stillness and occurrence.

It is here that your intense emotions can also begin to self-liberate. It is not that they decrease in intensity, but you can know that there's nothing to do. It's okay that there's anger; it will go. You don't have to get rid of it, it will go ... This is not disassociation when done in this way. Disassociation from pain is what we must take care to avoid. We are working towards the full opening of the heart, allowing oneself to be vulnerable, but not owning whatever comes along. Disassociation contains fear. When it arises, analyze it in the same way and let it go.

(Resuming pauses between sentences.) Not holding on to anything ... not getting rid of anything ... just being, with pure awareness and an open heart ... You begin to see that even arising is the natural movement of mind ... Pure awareness does not attach to stillness but sees all that arises as part of the nature of mind. Choiceless awareness ...

I am going to be quiet for a few moments. Try this process; if thoughts speed up, that's fine. All the more chance to practice. You are not stopping thought, but changing your relationship to it ... moving to see thought from the perspective of the ultimate.

(Long pause. We sit silently and meditate. Ends with bell.)

Barbara: Aaron is asking if we will share whatever we are experiencing as we work with this.

(Some of the group comments.)

Experiencing the constant movement between analysis of the thought, which can be "Where did it come from?" or "Whose thought is it?" "Mine," "Who am I?" and, after it goes "poof," that moment of pure awareness that transcends all of this relative reality.

Just being in it; very still even in the arising.

The pure awareness really does stabilize!

Barbara: I've been working with this with Aaron for almost two years, but I found that the intense practice of doing this at the retreat for a number of weeks really lead to a profound change in my awareness. It was very powerful. As in all of our life, the most important factor is how aware we are, the level of mindfulness that we bring to it.

(Break.)

Questions and Answers

Barbara: This is a question that Aaron says is a pretty universal one. *(Reading question.)* I've been feeling particularly good, even wonderful, since the retreat. However, I've noticed that I've been doing things to sabotage feeling good. When I tuned into the sabotage I felt angry toward the part that was doing or causing the counter-productive behavior and activity and told it to leave. Then I thought, okay, I'll embrace that part of me instead of denying or trying to get rid of it. When this shift occurred I first felt a peacefulness, then accepting. As the accepting feeling grew I

asked the sabotaging part why it wanted to sabotage. The reply instantly came: there's risk in feeling good. I asked further, what does this mean: no response. Aaron, what does it mean?

Aaron: I am Aaron. This relates to the holding on to unworthiness that we spoke about at the workshop, and have spoken about here very often. All of you, indeed every human being in any culture, has times of feeling unworthy, inadequate, of comparing itself to others. In some cultures this is more prevalent because it has become learned behavior in that culture. Yours is a culture in which it is highly prevalent. I want to tell a story from a conference of Western Buddhist teachers with the Dalai Lama.

They were sitting around a table. One woman asked the Dalai Lama, "What about those people who really don't like themselves, who really have a lot of self-hatred?" The Dalai Lama was puzzled. He said "You mean people in mental hospitals?" The participants turned and looked at one another, and their spokesperson said "No, those of us sitting around the table." Such self-hatred is felt much more in your culture. That doesn't mean it doesn't exist in Eastern cultures, but there's much less focus on a self. Your culture brings out that me-ness, me against, me doing, me as separate. So, it accentuates the feelings of inadequacy because of course no one can always do everything well.

What is this about? No matter how loved you are as children your needs are never totally met. Even the most loving parents, stumbling out of bed at 3 AM to a squalling infant, may fumble with the diaper, may not have food ready instantly, or may show some expression of displeasure and tiredness. Since so many of you were not tended by loving parents, but faced many different degrees of abuse, that sense of unworthiness is accentuated. The infant and young child has an overriding need to be embraced by the adults in its life, to win their favor, to please them and to feel loved. Most soon learn when love is conditional on certain behaviors and move into patterns of behavior that seek to please the adult in order to be loved. It can not help this. To feel safe, secure and loved is a overriding need. One child may learn that when it pleases the adult and becomes the caretaker, then the adult favors it, so it learns that pattern. Another may learn that when it allows itself to be a doormat, then the adult seems to favor it. Each adapts in the ways it must to feel loved. Those adaptations become the patterns for your adolescent and adult behavior.

When the message is even subtly one of being unworthy, when the adult says "Why are you so careless, why are the towels on the floor, why did you spill your milk?" even that bit of harshness is read by the child in one of two ways, acceptance, which feeds the sense of inadequacy or defiance, which, ironically, also may feed inadequacy. The child may have the attitude that the adult is wrong and the child is right, and what he or she did isn't so bad. The child may then be defiant and say "I just spilled my milk." But then if the adult gets angrier it takes the child further from the possibility of love, makes him/her feel unworthy of that love. Then defiance becomes a stance behind which the maturing being hides its sense of unworthiness.

The other alternative is that the adult is right, the child is careless, forgetful and no good. But deep in its heart the child knows that is not true. How does it cope with the dishonesty in which it must live?

Most of you grow up with a very deep level of rage, even those of you who have loving parents, because they are human and have not been perfect. When you felt wrongly criticized, if you attacked the adult, that was not safe. So you turned that anger into yourself. You convinced yourself "I really am no good," as one way of handling the rage.

Being "good" doesn't feel safe, in part because you have learned such deep patterns of acceptance of the negative labels that were thrown your way. In order to comply with the adults' need for a scapegoat you've offered yourself as the sacrificial lamb, because that's what brought the illusion of love. To some degree or other, this has happened to all of you. It's part of your learning. Not being good is equally unacceptable for some of you who have needed to be "the good one" to gain acceptance. There is subsurface rage in either case, rage which turns against the self and enhances unworthiness.

If we take it one step further and look at it from the spiritual perspective, part of what you are here to learn is compassion and equanimity with what arises within you. What if you never experienced any negative emotions? How would you learn? You all know the story of Gurdjieff and the yeast for the bread.

(**Barbara:** *Retelling this story in the transcript for readers unfamiliar with it.*) Gurdjieff had a spiritual community in France. There was one man who could not get along with the others. He didn't do his share of the work; he was rude; he was even unclean in his physical aspects. Finally he chose to leave. Gurdjieff went after him, asked him to return. The man said "No." G. begged him to return, finally offered to pay him, so the man returned. The others in the community were aghast, "How could you do this?" G. replied, "He is like the yeast for the bread; without his presence, how would you learn nonjudgment and compassion?")

Aaron: All of that which is negative and seemingly thrown at you is not just something dumped on you for no reason, but the yeast for your own personal bread, the opportunity to practice what you most need to practice. That doesn't mean we go out and seek abuse, thinking "I need some practice, I think I'll go get beaten up." Your life gives you enough pain that you never need to seek it. But pain is an unavoidable element of human incarnation. In this society, much of your pain has been that of unworthiness, aloneness and alienation. In some other societies, much of the pain may be that of starvation or other kinds of hardship. One rarely dwells on unworthiness when one is starving or being tortured! What are you learning? Why did you incarnate into this culture?

Why is it unsafe to feel good? When you are feeling good, in what way does that rob you of some of your defenses? Defenses against what? When you feel good, the heart is open, connected. There is no defendedness, nothing against which to defend. When you're not feeling good there can be subtle levels of anger or depression, or a sense of something lacking. You may feel fragmented or incomplete. What do those feelings protect you from? It is painful to feel isolated or depressed. Is it also safe?

I ask you to ask yourselves: "What if I were not feeling unworthy now? What might I be feeling?" "What if I were not feeling isolated now, what might I be feeling?" The answer is not simple. These questions help you connect to that space where you have judged yourself so severely because rage, greed, fear, or whatever, has arisen. "Unworthiness"

protects you from the very fundamental rage and terror of your seeming separation and isolation, the fears that your needs won't be met, that you won't be heard, and that you'll be hurt. It also protects you from the need to move to the open, undefended heart.

Each of you has places inside where you are a saint; each of you have places where you are a murderer. There is nobody in this room of loving people who has not at some time in its life felt that it could have killed. How do you start to find compassion for all of that in yourself? And you must find it if you are to let go of your judgment of yourself and others, which letting go is a primary part of spiritual growth. Compassion is an outgrowth of understanding, of true empathy, which grows out of honesty with yourself.

So, why is it so frightening to feel good? Why is it so frightening to come back to this deepest place of pure awareness? There's another reason beyond all that I've said. When you rest in this space of pure awareness, you know your ultimate responsibility. The whole flow of karma is absolutely clear. You can not hide anything from yourself in that place of pure awareness. Without the development of deep compassion for the human who must live through this tangle of emotions and thoughts, of being pulled and pushed, the burden of ultimate reality becomes too heavy to carry.

This is why wisdom must be tempered with compassion—both feet balanced. We need deep kindness toward the being that has to be that honest, kindness for its fear that it's not going to be able to carry through, tolerance of it when it falls in the mud, when it tries and can not carry through. Weight equally balanced! Wisdom must not become a hiding place.

One more reason why it is so hard to feel good: what if you lose it? That's always that fear. Suppose you're very, very hungry and I bring you a dish with your favorite food. You pick up the fork and just as you're about to put the fork into the food I take it away and say "No, I'm just showing it to you, it's not to eat." Suppose I show you a room where people are being very loving towards each other. You can feel the flow of energy, the connection, that's happening in that room. You start to walk across the threshold and I say "No, you must to say outside." You must begin to understand that nobody else is taking away your nourishment or connection; you are. Precisely because of the fear: what if you get too attached to it? That's another one of the fears that's part of this.

I've only scratched the surface here of why it's so hard for you to allow yourself to feel good. These are the predominate causes that I see. But, of course each of you could tell me a half dozen more. Has this sufficiently answered your question or shall I speak further?

(Related question: not transcribed.)

Aaron: The one suggested addition would be a more precise look at what to do when you come to the place where it's too scary to feel good. What do you do next? You don't do anything. We've gotten into this mess by constantly being fixers, trying to get this or that just right, and it never gets just right. Can you take the awareness one step further? You said you were able to see the fear and let it be. Can you let this be, too? Just knowing that right now you can't let yourself feel that good. Just watch it.

Not all of the possibilities I've suggested will be optimum for any one of you; some will predominate. Watch fear and see it dissolve. Then you shift back again to ultimate reality, because you've seen fear's story is just old mind playing its record. A friend calls it the "Top Ten Hit Parade." Just me being unworthy again. Just fear of getting caught in something I can not maintain; fear of loss. How many tens of thousands of times have you done it?

When you start to see that clearly you know, "In this moment, I'm not unworthy. In this moment, if I allow myself to feel good, of course it can't last. But I don't need to hold on to it because feeling good and feeling bad are all part of the flow." You keep coming back to this moment, using the truth you have seen as to why you're afraid to feel good, not as something you've got to fix or change, but as something around which you just make more space.

Let go of the ownership of it. That is the key. "I don't own this, it's just a cloud passing through, it's just a scratch in the record." How many raindrops does it take to create the Grand Canyon? It was never created by a massive upheaval in the earth, just by one repetition after another. Do you wish me to speak further about this, or is that sufficient?

Group: Enough for now.

Aaron: That is all.

(Discussion, not transcribed.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. Last week I spoke of an intention to begin deeper dream work this week. I want to look at dreams in two ways. The first is starting to do some group work with interpretation of dreams and learning how the conscious mind may learn by the sub-conscious' gift of the dream. I also want to begin work with what we call lucid dreaming, which is being aware when you are dreaming that you are dreaming. This life is a dream. Are you aware you are dreaming? You can carry it to different levels, but it's very helpful to come to the awareness during a dream, that it is a dream. So I want to start to teach you how to do that.

The first step is to simply become more aware of your dreams and to that end I would like to suggest that you start to write down or tape your dreams. I will let Barbara talk about the specifics of this; she within a body is more suited to speak of it.

Barbara: *(Laughing.)* Aaron said that in his last lifetime they didn't have tape recorders. They didn't even have pencil and paper so writing down dreams was hard.

You need to wake up much less if you keep a tape recorder by your bed. All you have to do is push the pause button. In the morning you wake up and there's a whole tape of dreams. You'll vaguely remember recording a couple of dreams, but you didn't have to wake up and turn on a light and write, so, it's much less disturbing to your sleep. But it does serve as enough of a jar to your memory that it allows you to remember the full dream. Or you can just keep a notebook by the bed and write them down.

The first step to remembering dreams is intention. As you're getting in bed, getting ready to go to sleep, make the statement "I want to remember my dreams." Start with the intention. You'll be surprised at how much you remember.

Obviously this dream work is optional. For anybody who would like to move on to working with Aaron with lucid dreaming, you'll find this is foundation for that work. Lucid dreaming is very powerful. If you really know that you are dreaming within the dream, you can make changes. In one dream you've got a dragon chasing you, and you stop and say, "No, this is a dream." Or you turn around and say "No" to the dragon. It's very powerful, very self-empowering. The first step is just to get in touch with your dreams, so we'll start there.

Wednesday, October 6, 1993

Aaron's talk

I am Aaron. Good evening and my love to all of you. As we move into new directions here, we also must stop and repeat at times, because you are human and you often fall into the same hole again and again. You flounder around in there saying, "Why am I here?" You climb out and take a step and fall in again. I don't say that with any criticism, only as reminder of why it becomes useful to rephrase that which we have discussed often before.

The most frequent question this week has been this: How do I know when I am choosing fear and when I am choosing love? Given a choice, how do I know if option A is the more loving or if option B is the more loving? A friend comes and asks me, "Can I borrow two thousand dollars?" This friend has not always been reliable. The friend says, "I really have repented of being irresponsible in the past and this is what I want the money for, to help me set up this new business." He talks to you about it a bit; it sounds well thought out. He readily answers your questions.

Yet, this is a friend who's leaned on you in the past and taken advantage of you. Is it more loving, presuming of course that you do have that much money to lend, to lend it or to say no? Do we continue to trust and trust and trust again? At what point do we then become doormats for others, inviting abuse from others? Is there ever a distinction that something is more loving to another but less loving to me? Or more loving to me and less loving to another? Or is it consistent: If it's more loving to one, will it necessarily be more loving to all?

My answer to that last question is yes, if you understand what loving means. We spent some time here several weeks ago talking about saying no with love, not being pulled into another's distortions, and how that no is often the most respectful and caring answer to both beings. If that no is accompanied by anger—"You hurt me before! I'm not gonna give it to you!"—then it doesn't come out of a place of respect. It comes out of a place of fear. So, it is not the "yes" or "no" which determines if the response is loving, but the attitude with which it's offered.

What if, in this hypothetical example, you say, "Yes, here's the two thousand." Three months later the friend is back saying, "Well, I lost it all. Sorry. But I have a new scheme. Can I have two thousand more? When I make money on the new scheme, I'll pay you four thousand. I've really had a change of heart now. I'm not gambling at all with my money anymore. This plan can't fail." Do you trust? Logic would say no. And yet, what if nobody trusts? Is that bad?

We tend to think that we need to protect others from pain, that we will trust others, give of ourselves and help others, because what if nobody helped? Can we make some distinctions here? Envision a being who can't swim; he thinks it's rather funny to jump off the dock and then yell for help because he likes to see everyone come crowding around. The first and second and third time, you pull him out. Is there ever a point when it's okay to let him drown?

Clearly, it depends on the situation. I would ask that being whose friend is leaping off docks, after he's done it three times, why do you come with him near the water? The problem for you is not his jumping off docks. The problem for you is that you're willing to accompany him to the dock. When he says, "Let's go down to the dock, I promise I'm not going to jump in today" ... "No, that's not something I can do with you anymore." This is not offered from a place of anger but from a place of respect. Once you're on the dock with him, you've got to pull him out. Get off the dock!

Some of you express confusion about your work. There are things you like about your job and things you don't like. This aspect is fulfilling, that aspect is difficult and painful. People don't appreciate you. You're not paid enough. You're not offered opportunity for independence or creativity. "Should I find a different job?"

I ask those people, basically, do you enjoy what you're doing? Yes. Sometimes, of course, it's no. Then it's clear it's time to look for a different job. No problem. But if it's yes ... what is the issue about? If you want more chance for creativity or independence or appreciation, are you inviting those or are there ways where you're rejecting those? If you move to a new job, is there going to be the affirmation you think you want? Is there going to be more independence, or are you taking shelter in that "can't get independence or affirmation" anger from a fear of independence and affirmation. Perhaps in your present job it's easy to say "I want this" because you know you're not going to get it. What if you got it? Maybe that independence is terrifying as well as longed for. Maybe the affirmation is going to be very discomforting because it jars the sense of inadequacy behind which you have hidden.

"Why would a sense of unworthiness or inadequacy be comforting?" you may ask. Some of you have learned to play those roles in childhood. They were the roles which won you approval. For you to be adequate and in control perhaps threatened the adults around you; they wanted you to be helpless; you complied. There was rage about the need of complicity. To become adequate or worthy, to acknowledge your innate adequacy or worthiness, opens a Pandora's Box of confused emotions. Safer to dwell in the illusion of inadequacy and complain about it.

I'm tossing out a lot of hypothetical situations here. I want to keep this talk relatively short so I'm going to come back to the details of these situations. We talk here often about not getting into a dialogue with fear. I sense that this has been misunderstood to mean "Don't feel fear." You've all heard me say "Fear is an illusion." But it's a very potent illusion. When you're caught up in fear, it's very hard to get out because the self solidifies around the fear. There's somebody being threatened, somebody fearing it will be hurt or its needs not met. So, you commence a war with fear: "I've got to get rid of this." But trying to get rid of fear is just another kind of dialogue with fear.

Letting go of the ownership of your fear ends the dialogue with it. When you no longer identify your fear as "you" but just allow the experience of it, knowing it's arisen and it will fade, then there is no more dialogue.

So what? When fear is no longer controlling you, then you're able to go deeper into your heart's wisdom and respond in loving ways. Your friend is here asking for a second two thousand dollars. Are you going out on the dock with him? Are you going to jump into his scheme again? You cannot know if what that friend needs to learn is deeper trust in himself and that he can succeed or to be more realistic, more careful. Perhaps

he needs to learn that actions breed reactions. If this happens, that happens, and we bear the repercussions of our choices. This is part of the law of karma.

You can't insulate your friend, keep providing situations over and over for that friend, or child or whoever it may be. You cannot know what they are learning; therefore, you cannot say, "My no is depriving them." Perhaps instead, your "no" is helping them to learn that there are limits. "These are my limits. I say no with love. You can come and talk to me about what's happening with your work. I'd be glad to help you send out your mailings or in other ways to support you in your choices. But no more money." The heart knows what to say. It's when you get into this dialogue with fear that says, "But am I hurting him?" that you get stuck.

Now, this is difficult because each of you wants to live your life with nonharm to others; but the question remains, what is nonharm? You can get caught in this incessant dialogue with fear which says that you have got to personally take care of the world or you're harming the world. When you look deeply at the roots of those thoughts, awareness penetrates into wanting to be the good one, wanting your own affirmation, wanting to be loved. Nothing wrong with any of those desires either, but if they are in control without your knowing that they're present, they'll lead you in unskillful directions, lead you into this unwholesome co-dependency of which we've so often spoken.

The other kinds of life choices: this job or that job? This relationship or that relationship? Can you begin to trust your heart's wisdom and to start to ask yourselves the right questions? Some of you have heard me say that you can manifest whatever you want to in your lives. But first you have to know what it is that you want. Most of you are sending out mixed signals: I want this—but it terrifies me. You can only manifest confusion when you send out a mixed message!

Perhaps you want a job with more independence or more control over others, a larger staff to help you. But you also sense within you the part of your nature that wants to dominate others, and you're afraid of that in yourself. There's also the part of you that wants to be in control because it fears being out of control, that's another one. So, unconsciously, you jeopardize each opportunity to move into that job where you're managing others; and then you complain, "Why can't I get a better job?"

What if you had the job? Are you still dialoguing with the fear—either thinking, "I should get rid of the fear" or just "I'm not going to face the fact that there is fear"?—rather than being able to say, "There's fear here. I don't know if I can trust myself to handle the situation. There's fear." It is not the fear that presents a problem but your relationship with fear. Fear will arise. Can you greet it with a smile?

Then you come to know that you can trust yourself. There are no more hidden motives. It's all on the surface. And each time there is, for example, a feeling of inadequacy that leads you to want to dominate and control, you just look it in the face and say, "Here's inadequacy again. I don't need to be reactive to it." Just note it. "This too ..." nothing to be done. You may begin to ask, "From where did this desire to dominate arise?" Then you begin to see the old mind fear and that in this moment, there is no need to dominate; it is just old fear. And then the management job that you've got becomes comfortable.

But when you sit back and say, "I want this! Why am I not being offered it? It's not fair!" know that at some level you are not allowing it to manifest because you're caught in this dialogue with fear. "What if I get it?" There is not one of you in this room for whom this isn't true at some level.

Let us speak briefly about two more aspects of this. First of all, to quote myself, "There's nothing in your life that is not here for your learning." And that includes fear. How are you going to learn equanimity with fear if you're never experiencing a sense of fear? How are you going to learn non-reactivity to fear? How are you going to learn to stop trying to get rid of fear and just let it be?

Think of something you're afraid of—big spiders maybe, or snakes, or rats, growling dogs—close your eyes and visualize one right here, sitting on the floor next to you. Big rat. Long whiskers. Spider with long hairy legs—a wolf spider. Whatever. Picture it there. The first thing you want to do is get up and run away. Or slam your hand down and kill it.

Continue to visualize it. Can you just be present with it, without destroying it? What is the fear about? Fear is an illusion. In this moment there's only a spider sitting here, who is probably more afraid of you than you are of him. I'm not going to talk about the ways we move from bare perception to old mind consciousness. It is on many tapes and transcripts. But it's old mind that's telling you the stories of past spiders, past insects. Perhaps they've not even hurt you, it's just the look of them. In this moment when bare perception looks, there's clear seeing, seeing a spider. The whole point of it is that after you've made this shift often enough, seeing clearly—"I am caught in the old mind story of my fear. When I look with bare perception, fear is an illusion"—each time you do that you cut through the fear. How would you learn that fear is an illusion if you had no chance to work with fear?

I've been talking here for the past few weeks about what I've called the horizontal and vertical planes. There is relative reality in which there is much that's frightening, including one's own sense of inadequacy, one's own desire for dominance, one's own greed or anger and that of other people, and the ultimate reality that cuts through all of those emotions. We don't deny that emotions, thoughts and sensations exist, but it's not who we are. When you let go of your identity with it all, including the fear, you move into this deeper space of knowing who you are and find the ability to just let it all rest and to act from the wisdom of a loving and connected heart. It does not mean that there's no longer fear, anger, greed, jealousy, impatience, any of these emotions.

The relative practice teaches you compassion for the human who experiences it all. The ultimate reality practice cuts through ownership of it. We did this last week, taking a thought balloon and popping it, then resting in that space of emptiness of self, emptiness of arising thought, until a new thought arose. You just keep cutting through it.

We've been talking about it as a horizontal and vertical practice and I wonder if instead we ought to talk about it as a circle. There are times on the circle when you are more on the horizontal and times when you're more on the vertical. You keep going around and around and around until it all comes together.

Wednesday, October 6, 1993

There is much more that could be said about this. I've promised a short opening talk tonight. I do want to get into the dream work we talked about last week, to start talking about lucid dreaming. I also want time for your questions. But this question of when one is choosing fear or love has been so prevalent this week that it needed to be spoken to. I thank for hearing me, for your energy and attention. That is all.

(Break.)

Questions

(Going around the room with many people offering questions.)

1. Why is there so much anger in the world?
2. Please share about your plane and how we can relate to it.

Barbara: Let me speak to that question briefly. In past years what we've done on these Wednesday nights is to answer all the questions that people had; people would come in, ask Aaron to share about his plane and a week later somebody else would and a week later somebody else would, so that some people were hearing it for the fifth, sixth or twentieth time. There was always a little something new but it got repetitive. What we're going to do with these questions that are already in transcript form is to direct you to transcripts where you can read Aaron's prior answers. Then if you still have questions, Aaron would be glad to speak to them.

More Questions

3. How does art heal? In what ways does the expression of art allow for healing?
4. I'd like to hear more about the idea of fear being an illusion. Is it because it's impermanent and that's how we learn to experience it as illusion?
5. Aaron frequently says to try and not "own" our emotions in order to make more space around them and be less reactive to them. However, when I am feeling strong anger, for example, it's very hard not to own it. So, how do we not own it, yet not deny it?
6. With the rapid planetary changes (political, environmental, social) I find that the fear and uncertainty can be crippling and cause self-destructive behavior. How can I turn this fear into loving action?
7. What purpose does physical pain serve?

(Barbara: Aaron says, for the most part, none at all.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. We have many questions here and one very deep question that is as yet unread. But I want to speak briefly to this question of physical pain. I am still learning. I do not feel physical pain. I have no body to feel pain. I feel sadness, even grief, but I don't experience physical pain. Yet I'm still learning. Everything serves a purpose. Some things are invited and some things more aptly cross your path and you might as well learn from them. Most of what arises in your experience is mix of both. You do not need pain to learn. When you pay attention, you learn. The pain reminds you to pay attention. When you ask me, what purpose does it serve, the reason I say "None" is you don't need pain to learn to pay attention. What you need to do is to learn to pay attention. It's not the pain that is the primary source of this learning; it's paying attention. But the pain is an excellent prod to pay attention.

(Pause.)

There is another side to this. Pain is not necessary, but as long as it is present, it does offer learning. Some of you find the physical pains of the body to be an excellent place for understanding the patterns of attachment and non-attachment. You want to feel

good; you don't like to feel bad. It's uncomfortable; it's unpleasant. Of course, you don't like to feel pain. But there is much wisdom that can be learned when you pay attention to your aversion to pain and grasping at freedom from pain.

There are many lessons derived with pain as foundation, but all of them can be learned without pain. That doesn't mean that you can go out tonight and decide to get rid of your pain because as long as you are in physical form your body is going to experience some pain. You develop the wisdom to see the difference between pain itself and the resistance to pain. You begin to open your heart to the pain, to lessen the war with your pain. Through doing so, you learn to lessen your ownership of all of your emotions. So pain can be a very potent teacher because you often cannot control it. It comes and it goes and comes again.

I'm not talking about resignation to pain. Resignation is a kind of defeat. I'm talking about the profound wisdom that knows: this is something that's going to move through a physical or emotional body. If it's not pain, it's going to be aging. That's another kind of pain. Even if your body was somehow miraculously in perfect health, free of any scratches or insect bites, no colds, nothing for many years, not even a strained muscle, eventually you're going to have to look at the pain of seeing that body deteriorate. If you approach that with a sense of resignation, there's a giving up quality to it. It's not that you are resigned to pain, resigned to aging, resigned to whatever comes up in your life, as that you find space for it. Can you feel the difference between resignation and equanimity? Let me pause here for some feedback.

M: It reminds me of a story I once read written by a friend of mine. It was about a being who once helped an alien life form that did not feel pain. When the food ran out on their planet, they began eating one another. The problem was they were becoming extinct. I think they developed another form of food and then they had to help these beings learn to feel pain so they could survive.

Barbara: Aaron is asking, can you all see that that is a value of pain?

Aaron: Pain is a survival tool. Would any of you be alive if you didn't feel pain? Or would you by now have scalded yourselves, cut off limbs, or in many ways destroyed yourselves? Pain is necessary to the survival on the physical plane because you must develop an awareness about this body that carries you around. You not only inhabit this body, you must learn to cherish it, a state very different from being attached to it.

I've given the key word: awareness. I do not have a physical body to mutilate. If I were briefly to move into incarnation now, hypothetically, to briefly have a physical body, I would need to substitute deep awareness for pain if I had no physical nerve endings. You do reach a level where you can be aware of your body on a cellular level.

Physical pain is rather gross. What you perceive of as burning in the knee or itching on the eye dissolves into a multi-faceted tingling. Those of you who have done deep work with meditation have experienced this. It stops being pain in a leg or arm or head; it breaks into a thousand parts. It stops being felt just as burning and becomes tingling, tightness, pulling, and many different sensations. You start to become aware of the movement of the itch, for example, up the leg and around, of the heat, of the tension of skin. When you become that deeply aware, the pain is just another sensation! You

are tuned in to the subtle aspects of your body and able to work much more fully with your body's energy.

This gets into a subject that I spoke about with a friend this afternoon. We were speaking about menopause and the changes in the physical body. Something that I'd like to talk about with all of you sometime is how you can begin to tune into the physical body and not be a slave to the dictates of the body. If you feel itching on the shoulder, must you scratch? You notice, "itching." You know it's not skillful to scratch it and break the skin. Perhaps you put some ice or medication on it, or you simply notice that it's itching.

I'm not suggesting that if you break a leg you shouldn't set that break, but if your body is experiencing hormonal or chemical changes, temperature fluctuations, faster or slower pulse, instead of scurrying to take care of whatever physical symptom may present itself by mechanical or medicinal means, can you just tune yourself in with deeper awareness. You know this is possible with what you call biofeedback. You can slow your pulse. If your blood pressure is too high, you can bring it down without chemicals. If there is hormone fluctuation from menopause you can work with it in the same way. There's no need to raise the heat; warm your body through the use of your mind!

I suggested to my friend this afternoon that eventually your society will learn to work with those who are addicted to alcohol in a new way. Rather than forbidding them that substance, they will be helped to learn to control the ways it influences the mind and body, to become responsible consumers who may allow themselves to develop that sense of what you call "highness" in safe situations and move to an awareness that no longer allows the alcohol to control the body if there is need to drive a car or do some other activity that is unsafe while high. It's all a matter of learning physical control of your body. It is something to which deep levels of meditation can take you.

We'll talk more about it in future weeks. It also relates to lucid dreaming: being aware when you're dreaming that you're dreaming. We could call it "lucid inebriation": being aware when you're drunk that you're drunk. In lucid dreaming you are no longer slave to the dream. What I am suggesting is that in lucid inebriation you are no longer slave to the alcohol. In "lucid menopause" you are no longer a slave to your hormones. And so on. We will speak further about it. That is all.

M: Aaron mentioned in our last private session about control of body chemistry in regards to schizophrenia and manic depression. This is related.

Aaron: I am Aaron. I want to go deeper. First, a very brief scheme of this for the few of you who have not heard it before. We divide you into groups called "densities." This is an ungraded classroom. You're not put in a specific grade where you must stay. You're free to be anywhere, but you choose to be where you can learn the most. One common vocabulary speaks of humans as third density. We are moving into what's been called a "new age." What this is about is that the whole Earth is going to become fourth density. Instead of moving to fourth density on the spirit plane, without future need for incarnation, there will be a choice. Some will wish to experience fourth density learning on Earth.

Equanimity with emotions is what I have offered as the key for readiness to move from third to fourth density. I've expressed this very simply by saying, in fourth density you are fully telepathic. You move into group telepathic sharing with others. If you were telepathic and everybody in this room were telepathic now, would that be okay with you? Have you had any thoughts in the past hour that you would not like to have shared? Is there still shame or discomfort? Might others have had thoughts that would upset you? In your spiritual work, you will not stop emotions from arising, nor need you. But you'll find so much space around them that there's no longer fear of them, no longer reactivity. You know you don't have to deny emotions, nor do you need to act them out. Yes, they do cease arising as rapidly, but there still will be emotions .

As you move toward this new age and toward readiness to graduate from third to fourth density, one of the things you're going to need to learn if there is going to be fourth density on the Earth plane is to deal with your physical bodies in a new way. It's not just the emotional body. If you're moving to fourth density without a physical body, you have no need to attend to the physical body any further. But if there's going to be fourth density with a physical body, that physical body is still going to get cut, burned, or bruised. It's still going to age. It's still going to have chemical distortions, hormonal distortions, and so on. So, a new phase for all of your learning is going to be opening with equanimity to the physical body and learning not to be the slave of the distortions of the physical body. Are there questions?

Barbara: (*Reading a related question at Aaron's suggestion.*) One of the main obstacles to feeling consistently good seems to be the existence of archaic childhood memories and feelings—ghosts, as it were. You have explained well how these feelings get suppressed and repressed. For the child, it is indeed a matter of survival to do this. As an adult, it is not a matter of survival and the repressed feelings become obstacles. It is not uncommon for an adult to feel rejection and abandonment. If these feelings are felt and perhaps expressed—feelings of abandonment and rejection—they are experienced as just as powerful, if not more so, from the person feeling them (*self rejecting or abandoning self*) as from an outside source (*another's abandonment or rejection*). In a pragmatic, hands-on sense, what is the relationship between ultimate and relative reality in removing this specific obstacle?

Aaron: To answer this, let us return to the first question: Why is there so much anger in the world? Let me simplify the question and toss it back to you: Why is there so much anger in you? May we have some feedback?

Group responses: Because I don't get what I think I want.

Because there's fear.

Covering hurt.

Sexual frustration.

Because it comes up.

Life is not fair.

Aaron: I am Aaron. My dear ones, you are the world. You say, why is there so much anger in the world? When you have fully understood why there is so much anger within yourself, and have come to a place of equanimity with that anger—seen the way that it

arises from old mind consciousness, seen the ways that you get caught in old mind, and learned to come back to this moment—then that which we call anger will very seldom catch you. It's still going to arise because in human form you're never going to be free of distortion. But when you see anger arising there will be no identification with it, nor need to act upon it. It will be a warning flag waving. It says, "Here there is fear. Fear that I'll be hurt. Fear that my needs won't be met." It may take any of the forms you've suggested: here is anger that the world is not fair, there is sexual frustration, or anger that people don't give you the answer you want. It's all part of that, "My needs may not be met. I might be hurt."

You have learned an habitual pattern of dealing with those fears through the arising of anger. No matter what is happening in this moment ... Here's a neighbor that comes in and he's stamping his feet and yelling. Nobody can quite figure out why. He's bringing in tremendous rage. Maybe he's yelling that a car drove over his front lawn, making tracks, and he's accusing the people here.

You see anger arise in yourself. You're unjustly accused. "Life is not fair. I didn't do it." Maybe he's going to take out a gun and shoot us. "I could be hurt. Instead of praising me for being here and doing work on myself, he's accusing me." All of these little bits of old mind come up.

In this moment there's only a man standing there feeling rage. That's all. When you start to see that clearly, you begin to move into compassion for him. Clear wisdom begins to understand that he cannot make you angry, it's your fear that makes you angry, and your need to protect.

Sometimes that anger is useful. We've talked about the use of pain in survival, that otherwise you'd cut off limbs. In the past, anger was also a useful mechanism for the species. It creates a rush of adrenaline. It gives your body more power. That's not usually true in these times though, unless somehow you've come to hand-to-combat with another, or need to flee and need that adrenaline for speed.

In this moment, there's just somebody being angry. If you are going to survive, you're going to have to allow to drop away the old and inefficient tools of survival which prompted the beings that you were to move to combat with that which realistically might hurt you. You must replace that defended reaction with deeper wisdom, empathy and understanding which acknowledges your connection to this raving human in the middle of the living room, which doesn't need to confront him but can allow him to express his pain. Anger can become a catalyst for compassion. It does not need to be a catalyst for hatred or greed.

So, why is there so much anger in the world? It comes with the incarnative experience! It is the illusion dweller's prime illusion. It does offer the opportunity to break through the illusion of separateness.

It teaches you compassion. It's a constant catalyst grown out of your fear; it reminds you there are skillful and unskillful ways to work with this fear. You can come back to the arising of anger again and again and again and hate others. All you are doing is practicing anger. Or you can see how futile that is and allow the arising of fear and that fear's blossoming into anger to remind you: "Stop, take a deep breath, open my heart, let go of the separation between myself and the catalyst for my fear or anger."

Come to experience that being's fear. Find compassion for us both." This is something you're going to have to practice hundreds or thousands of times before you really get it right.

So anger is a tool to learning; when enough of you have learned to work skillfully with your anger then there's not going to be so much anger in the world. There is so much anger in the world because most of you still allow yourselves to get away with anger without calling yourself on it, without asking yourself simply, "What is this anger?" By "calling yourself on it," I don't mean getting rid of it, or judging it, just asking the simple question, "What is this anger about? Can I take responsibility for my anger instead of blaming another?" That's the crux of it. When each of you can take responsibility for your own anger without needing either to own that anger or to get rid of it, then you're going to find that it is an illusion and that the fear that heralded it was an illusion.

We have been asked, what is the relationship of ultimate reality and relative reality in removing the obstacle of repressed feelings? Feelings become repressed because you've judged them. You've been taught to do that since childhood. This is bad behavior. That's good behavior. That's part of the way that your parents were taught and have moved themselves to teach you. And so you grew up judging yourself and needing to repress what's uncomfortable.

You must learn to work with all of this—not only repressed feelings, not only anger, but fear, jealousy, desire, physical pain, all of the variety of thoughts, emotions and sensations which the human experiences—from the relative reality plane, which sees how old mind has recreated the situation again and again, and from the ultimate reality plane that understands there never was good or bad, worthy or unworthy, that there is no duality. This is something that we can only scratch the surface of tonight. We're going to be talking about it for weeks, months even, and still have just scratched the surface.

I want you to see relative and ultimate reality as a continuum. I know I've been speaking of an intersection. Speaking of this with friends earlier today, I could see their confusion in visualizing the intersection. Duality of relative/ultimate was enhanced with the question, "This is relative (horizontal axis) and that is ultimate (vertical axis). Where do I balance?" Think of it instead as the vertical process of ultimate reality cutting through delusion and the relative practices of opening the heart, deepening compassion, being mindful. They are not opposites, but work together! See that they come together as a curve, each leading into the other. You may start wherever you like: one foot on each end coming to the middle, both feet on one end. Eventually, through your many lifetimes, you're going to be drawn to the middle of the curve. I said earlier tonight that we would think of it as a circle, a spiral drawing inward to that spot which contains everything.

I have been asked to speak further about fear as delusion. What is fear but learned behavior? There's a tiger in a tree branch about to pounce. You could be killed in a moment. That sounds very uncomfortable. Fear arises. Fear is the body's habitual response which creates this adrenaline, readies you to do battle with that tiger. On the relative plane, there might be use in that bio-physical response, if you really had to do battle with a tiger. But increasingly your life takes you away from that kind of physical battle, at least those of you in this culture. I'm not saying there isn't street crime, but I'm

not sure it's of much use to feel fear when you turn around and there's a mugger with a gun pointed at you. These are learned responses. You can learn more skillful responses. What of it is old mind conditioning, just the way you've always done it so it's become a tendency and a habit? What of it is in this moment?

There is a wonderful story of a man who was walking when suddenly a tiger spotted him and the man fled. He came to the edge of a cliff where he was trapped so he started to climb down. He found a giant root to hold onto. The tiger was snarling over the top. He looked down to see how could he descend and when he looked down, there was another tiger snarling below. At that moment some mice came out and began to gnaw on the root he was holding. He looked around for some way out and there was nothing, just this bare cliff, a tiger above, a tiger below, the mice gnawing on the root. And the only other thing was a tiny ledge with some strawberries. What is there to do? He began to eat the strawberries. One can live a lifetime in the mindful eating of one strawberry! Would he have been better off to tremble there until the root was gnawed through and he fell?

In this moment there's no fear. There's clear seeing. All you have is this moment, and within it, you have a choice. There is a tiger above and a tiger below. The mice are gnawing on the root, for all of you. Each day you're a day older. Eventually you're going to die. Are you going to tremble about it or stop and eat the strawberries?

This is the cutting through of the wisdom of ultimate reality. I'm moving through this life as all beings do. I was born and I'm going to die. I have some control but not ultimate control. There's going to be pleasure, there's going to be pain. There's going to be joy and sadness. Am I going to spend my life grasping at the joy, at the pleasure, trying to keep the sadness and pain at bay? Or am I going to just look around and see the strawberry and eat it, fully mindful? No matter how long or short a time I have left to live? I can still enjoy the strawberry. I can still enjoy this conversation with a friend, this symphony, this breath! Just that.

That is the junction of ultimate and relative: working compassionately to accept all that moves through the human while truly seeing that it all is a dream. How many lives have you lived? Many of you have lived more lives than you've had nights sleep in this life. Do you dream each night? Which is the dream: what you enter into at night or this lifetime? That doesn't mean you don't live it with love. But it is just another dream: the dream of "somebodyness," of identification with this body and ego. That's not who you are. Until you know your true divinity—and that knowledge allows you to cut through this ego-grasping—you're going to relate to the world from that place of self and create suffering for yourself and others, and continue your dialogue with fear.

Much of what your life is about, whether you are putting weight on the foot on relative or ultimate reality, is learning how you relate to and from this ego self. The ultimate reality cuts through to the reality that the ego self simply is non-existent. The relative reality helps you to find growing compassion for the human who thinks he or she is somebody, growing compassion for all beings caught in that delusion.

There is one more aspect of this, a large one, that I would save for another night. That is all. Before we go on to the other questions, I would like to hear your responses. It feels more important to me that we continue to shape this into a dialogue than that we

cover everything. We will hold onto this list of questions. Perhaps I will base some future talks specifically on questions from this list. That is all.

Barbara: Aaron is asking, can you better understand this balance between relative and ultimate, and the ways that we're trying to come to rest in that curve between them?

(Someone gives an example of a marble on a track: it rolls back and forth and finally comes to rest in the center.)

(Group microphone is not working and some comments are lost.)

Barbara: *(Back to question 3.)* In what way does the expression through art allow for healing to occur?

Aaron: I am Aaron. Art is the manifested form of the emotional and mental bodies. Especially it flows from the emotional body. It doesn't matter whether this is the creation of a painting or poem, of a dance, of a symphony, the playing of music. You had thought that you owned those emotions and related to them with so much attachment or aversion. In the creation of your art you give reign to the universality of emotion and of thought. It's a way of saying, "Here is my anger or my longing or my love," and sending it out—not in ways that it's going to inflict itself painfully on other people, but in ways that others may identify with it and come to their own sense of the commonality of emotion, their own cessation of ownership of it.

Why is it helpful to you to sit here and hear others expressing some of your questions? You learn that you don't own that question or the pain that has given rise to that question. This knowledge allows you to shift from the small ego self to the heart-connected space where it's no longer my pain, my question, my fear, but our pain, our questions, our fear. Art serves the same function of allowing the sharing of pain. It links the personal with the universal, while stating the universal through the personal. It must be personal if it's to be attended to; it must be universal if others will hear it! ... *(Tape ran out; some lost.)*

I do not mean that art must be maudlin. Quite the contrary. It transcends that "maudlinness" which comes from personal anguish when it moves into the impersonal. So you let go of the personal when you send out your art, and in that letting go you heal yourself. The one receiving it is also aided to transcend the personal pain and thus aided in healing because its ownership with that pain is severed. Does that answer your question sufficiently or would you like me to speak further on it?

Barbara: *(Paraphrasing Aaron.)* Aaron encourages us to bring in well-thought-out questions that we have already written down to provoke deeper discussion. Aaron reminds us that next week will begin our discussion of dream work. We will be working with the arising of fear in our dreams through lucid dreaming, and also a deeper level of lucid dreaming that uses the dream itself as part of the knife that cuts through delusion. We can use our understanding of how we dream while the body sleeps to see how we're dreaming while the mind sleeps. He'll talk more about this next week. We can begin to record our dreams in preparation for this discussion. Common dream symbols will be briefly discussed to get us started.

Wednesday, October 13, 1993

Aaron's talk

I am Aaron. Good evening and my love to all of you. I'm going to do something a bit different tonight and break this opening talk into two parts with no attempt to connect them.

As usual I want to address what seems to be the issue of the week. I also want to make time to get into dreams. This is not going to be a basic talk about dream analysis. I want to speak to you about lucid dreaming, what it is and ways that you may work more deeply with it. I also want time after the break for a good discussion of all of this and for your questions.

We have been speaking about this curved intersection between relative and ultimate reality—the relative reality where there is constant occurrence, turmoil and activity with which you must work skillfully; the ultimate reality, which transcends that turmoil. You find as you rest in that curve that you do not need to be in a still place to have stillness. Stillness does not mean silence and lack of activity. It means lack of fretting about the noise and activity, just letting it move through you.

Several years ago Barbara and Cassie were at Plum Village in France, Thich Nhat Hanh's community. They call Thich Nhat Hanh, Thay; it is Vietnamese for teacher. One of the nuns who was there reflected to Barbara Thay's teaching about stillness and occurrence, which was so beautifully simple that Barbara was very moved by it.

She said that they work a lot with refugees in crisis situations. There is constant turmoil, frequent situations that might truly be called those of life and death, such as refugees on a boat who may drown if help doesn't come to them, or those who are being turned away from the shore. What's going to happen to them? Yet, this community maintains a certain mindfulness ritual. They come into a meal and they eat in silence for, perhaps, twenty minutes or half an hour. Then a bell is rung, just once. That is a sign that they may begin talking. They sit at table for another ten, twenty or thirty minutes, not just in idle chatter but mindful conversation. Three meals a day.

So Barbara asked this nun, what happens when there is an activity with a lot of turmoil, a crisis; does the community continue to function in this very calm way? She said yes, that is the basis of their being. They create a space of inner silence, out of which their energy may flow. It may be a life or death situation, but if you sit calmly and allow that inner light to be nurtured, allow yourself to rest in that space of deepest stillness and peace, then when you return to that very important work you will not be caught up in the ego self that is striving to fix this and fix that. You will allow the deeper self to be in control of the energy, allowing universal energy to flow through you, to direct action appropriately, without the fear and tension that creates inner turmoil that leads you to snap at people and to make inappropriate choices out of fear. The more tense the situation, the more you need that stillness.

How many of you face the day with the thought "I'm too busy today to be mindful or to meditate. I'm too busy for stillness, I've too much to get done"? How much of your reactivity grows out of your denial of that basic nurturing to the spirit self?

We have been talking here a lot about stillness and occurrence, about their patterns. There are times when it will be still, within and without, and times when there will be turmoil. You can never find inner stillness when there is a clinging to creation of outer stillness, because then you must get rid of this or that situation. You can only find inner stillness when you truly have no need to make the outer world manifest in a specific way. There may be a preference, but inner peace grows from the awareness that it's okay either way.

For most of you, when you have an entire day when you're going to be alone and quiet, and it's a beautiful day of perfect weather, with time to take a walk and read and meditate, if somebody was to ask you "Could you do me a favor for a few minutes?" you would say "Of course, no problem." Here is your neighbor, perhaps, knocking on your door. "Could you just come and help me carry something heavy for five minutes?" Your response is simply "Of course." Now, another day comes along when you have a heavy schedule. The same neighbor knocks on your door. Perhaps you're standing at the kitchen counter pushing down a sandwich with one hand and making a marketing list with the other. "Can you help me carry something heavy?" Resentment may not arise but a sense of fear will arise, "I can't do all of this. Too many demands on me." Perhaps you won't snap at your neighbor; you'll smile and say "Of course" and you'll go and carry it. Then five minutes later, when you've returned home and your child comes home from school or your spouse or partner comes home from work and asks "Would you make me a cup of tea?" you snap "What do you think I am? You make your own tea." Or you make tea with an attitude of martyrdom, thinking "Poor me, always asked to give."

It's very easy to keep your equanimity in heaven. Can you keep it in hell? The earth plane is not about creating heaven in your daily lives. Yes, certainly, you can go off to a mountain top and meditate. But eventually you're going to need to come down and stock up on your food. How are you going to deal with the marketplace?

I want you to begin to look at the ways that you respond to pressure. That will pinpoint for you how you're doing on the spiritual path. I'm not suggesting that you're not learning something even if you're reactive under pressure, but can you now begin to carry that learning into the most extreme turmoil of your daily life? How many of you see yourself in this picture. You have just come home from work feeling tired from a long day. The telephone and the doorbell simultaneously ring; perhaps a child starts to cry or the dog to bark. You become explosive, if not outwardly, at least inwardly. What happened to your stillness?

I want to offer a hypothetical example here. Let us look at the situation and what could have been done. It has been a harried day for both partners. They come home and agree to order pizza. Easy for everybody. Each of them has retreated into their own space, tired from the long day. Suddenly the doorbell rings; it's the pizza delivery. She asks him "Where is the money? Where is your wallet?" He responds "On the sofa." So she glances at the sofa and, as is his usual pattern, his jacket, briefcase, paper and so on are tossed there. She picks up one or two things quickly off the sofa, no wallet. Again she asks, to the doorbell's insistent ring, "Where's your wallet." Again he says, "On the sofa." "No it's not," she snaps. "On the sofa." And he lifts his briefcase aside, lifts his jacket, and there is the wallet. Why did she have to snap? What was that about? Where did the stillness go? Do each of you see yourself reflected in this? Is there

anybody here who hasn't snapped in just that way sometime in the past week? I think not.

Let's investigate this a bit, in several different ways. What is really happening and how might one move to more skillful response? In this case perhaps she's angry because he always comes home and throws his stuff on the sofa and she's been resenting it for years but never said "I wish you wouldn't throw your stuff like that, but put it away." Maybe she's simply had a hard day. Maybe she spent the afternoon trying to find a paper that a secretary had misfiled. The wallet was just one more thing to look for. The reasons are myriad. One must stop and honestly ask oneself, "What am I really angry at?"

That moment where there is the urge to explode is the moment when your spiritual practice proves or disproves its validity. It's easy to keep your equanimity in heaven, can you keep it in hell? Not much of a hell just looking for a wallet; there are much greater hells than that. But at that moment, it is the inspiration for turmoil. This is when your mindfulness practice proves its value. If you have worked with yourself repeatedly, training yourself to be aware of what's arising in you, not to condemn it but not to fling it at others, then in that moment when you go to the sofa, and the man is ringing the doorbell and the dogs are barking or the baby is crying, you will be able to stop and say "Feeling tension, feeling anger." That's a giant, flashing, red warning sign, STOP. Unless the house is on fire, and even then a moment might be of more value spent breathing rather than running, stop, take a deep breath. Breathing in "I am aware of my tension, of my anger, of my pain." Breathing out, "I smile to my anger, my tension, my pain. I do not wish to inflict this on another. My partner's throwing his or her jacket and briefcase on the sofa is not to blame for my emotions. Nothing is to blame for my emotions. Why do I need to say it's his or her fault? What is the anger about?"

Spiritual growth, my friends, is about becoming responsible for all that moves through you and not needing to throw it at others. Spiritual growth is also about penetrating the illusion that this is a solid reality, a solid self to whom it's happening. We're working on the relative and the ultimate plane, then. To stop in that moment of anger and use only the brain and not the heart to say "Wait, this is not reality here. There's nobody feeling anger, there's no mess on the sofa," is to deny the pain. To move the other way and say "I am the fixer and I am going to calm myself down and I'm going to find the wallet and I'm going to take a deep breath," can entrench you more in being somebody doing. Can you come to that meeting space, breathing and making space for your anger or frustration?

Ask yourself "Whose anger is this? Where did it come from? How did it arise?" By "How did it arise," I don't mean that you analyze each moment of your day that led to the arising of this moment of anger. Only that within the context of that question one recognizes immediately that this is old mind. Right now there is simply the pizza delivery person at the door ringing the bell, the baby crying and the dog barking. My spouse is in the bathroom and I must attend to this. Right now you are feeling pressure, feeling sorry for yourself. Who is it who's feeling sorry for themselves? This being that you have been since infancy and with whom you identify, this mind stream of old mind that has felt infringed upon by others so many times, is that who's feeling sorry for itself? If you come to a clear sense of who you are in this moment as spirit, is there anything happening to feel sorry for? All you need to do is stop and notice and smile to your

anger. Then go to the door and apologize to this person "I'll be back in a minute with the money," lift up and hug the baby and go back in and find the wallet. You may ask yourself, "What prevents me from acting skillfully in that way? Where am I getting caught?"

I want to repeat this because I consider it so important. If your spiritual practice is not leading you to both more responsibility and more loving and skillful response, then it's not working. If your spiritual practice is leading you to disassociate yourself from the world and seek a still mountain top, you are still deluding yourself. I'm not suggesting that all of those monastics, yogis and so on who go off to live on mountains are living in delusion. Perhaps they have done their work in the world and now is their time of rest. But, you are here; what are you going to do about it? How are you going to live it with more love?

I want to impress upon you the importance of this dual practice. First is working skillfully with the pain of the moment, whatever that anger, pain, frustration or need may be about, and asking yourself whose anger, whose pain is it? How did it arise? Can you see the way it dissolves when you cease owning it, the way awareness enables you to smile at this self that's playing the same old record again—"My problem, my pain, my anger"? See the owning of it all. Come back to a sense of who you really are. It is the kindest thing you can do, not only for others but for yourself. Resting in that awareness is the second part.

You build the habit that carries you through turmoil by beginning to work with light occurrence. A friend puts it very beautifully: start with the ten pound weights, you'll get a hernia if you start with the hundred pound weights. Practice with the pizza delivery and when the house is burning down you'll know how to get yourself and your loved ones out safely, without panicking. When the ship with thirty refugees is in danger of sinking, you'll know that it's valuable to sit quietly for twenty minutes and eat lunch—to allow yourself to come back to that place of stillness in which the true self emerges empowered because there's no identification of me, empowered because it truly allows the flow of universal energy through it. It is that unlimited aspect of you that truly will alleviate the suffering in the world—not the frantic one that dashes about throwing buckets of water frantically on each small blaze it sees, but the one who sits back and says "The world is burning, where do I start?" and allows wisdom and a loving heart to provide the answer, not fear and its outgrowths of anger and hatred. I would welcome your questions after our break to speak about this more directly in your own lives.

I want to shift topics here for a few minutes and begin to talk about dreams. I've asked you to bring in dreams to share, that we might begin to get into the process of working with dreams in more depth. About half of you here have worked with dreams with me before, half of you have not. What I want to provide here tonight is just some basic background. First of all, to work with your dreams you must begin to record them. You must begin to let the dreaming aspect of yourself know "I value this information that's coming through and I will attend to it." Recording may mean writing a note and then going back to sleep or pressing a button on a tape recorder. Try it and see what works best for you.

You have many different kinds of dreams, but they seem to exist on two basic levels. One is the symbolic dream and one is what I call a teaching dream. In the symbolic

dream you are doing things and/or there are other people. They may seem to be the mundane things of your life, but they are related to your life on one level and symbolic on another level. An example that comes to mind is a dream that Barbara had some years ago, a particularly vivid dream when she was working a good deal with mindfulness. She dreamt she rode a bike down a long hill and then left it for a moment in front of a building because something attracted her attention. When she came back the tires, handle bars and seat had all been taken. She was infuriated. She saw a woman getting on a bus carrying these particular parts of her bike. She confronted her, saying "Those are mine." The woman handed them back willingly and said, "Yes, never leave your vehicle unattended." A dream about mindfulness: What do you think? Your body is your vehicle. How often during the day do you leave it unattended, with your mind off somewhere else?

In these symbolic dreams every character in the dream is an aspect of you. This does not mean that if Aunt Mildred just died and you have a dream in which Aunt Mildred appears and you are delighted to see her, that on one level the dream is not about missing her. But on another level, each person in the dream is an aspect of you. The dream will be about something very different also. Perhaps Aunt Mildred had certain characteristics with which you identified. Perhaps you were afraid of the loss of those quantities in yourself. Perhaps Aunt Mildred was very generous and you loved that about her. Perhaps you're afraid to be generous in the way she was and her death has made you think about how you could better emulate her generosity. At that level, Aunt Mildred in the dream is an aspect of you. Perhaps you wonder if that aspect of yourself is dying and wonder if it can be revived. Maybe in the dream Aunt Mildred has died and you are trying to shake her and bring her back to life. Yes, on the one level you loved her and miss her. On the other level you're trying to shake and bring back to life your own potential for generosity that she symbolizes.

We generally find certain symbols that are quasi-universal. A being of the same sex in your dream is often an aspect of your conscious mind. A being of the opposite sex is often a manifestation of your subconscious mind. A child in a dream may be a new or young aspect of yourself, something that's just coming into being. An old person or teacher may be an older and wiser aspect of yourself. Vehicles—cars, planes, trains, bicycles—often represent the body or may even represent the spiritual journey, the vehicle that takes you through your path. I can not begin to tell you how many meditation students, when they are struggling in the beginning stages of meditation with the misunderstanding, "I must stop thoughts from arising, I must get still," and beginning to feel like inadequate meditators (not that there could be such a thing but that's the feeling), and wondering "Is this practice right for me?" have dreams of cars with flat tires, or bicycles with wheels falling off, or trains that run off the track. So it seems that these physical vehicles do represent your physical vehicle on your journey. What I think we will do is to ask Barbara to assemble a list, with my help, not a elaborate list but, perhaps, twenty or thirty of the most common of these quasi-universal symbols. We will hand that out next week.

The other level of dreaming is what we call the teaching dream, in which you have a sense of sitting either in a classroom or by yourself in front of a teacher and being offered wisdom. This is precisely what is happening; there is nothing symbolic about it. You leave your body often in your dreams and move to the astral plane. You're open at

the conscious and subconscious levels, hearing your guides and teachers. One of the uses of lucid dreaming (by which I mean knowing that you are dreaming when you are dreaming) is to come to know: "I am dreaming now, therefore I am out of my body and on the astral plane, and this guidance is real. If I can remember it, it will help me." This is something that you can all learn to do.

I am capsulizing all of this now and will go into more details in coming weeks. I just want to cover all the types of dreams you may have. The first step to the practice of lucid dreaming is just like the first step in remembering your dreams, you begin with stating the intention as you get in bed and pull up the covers. This works best once you have first developed the practice of recording your dreams. You state the intention: "Tonight while I am asleep, I want to be aware that I am dreaming. I intend to do this." You might have to do it a dozen or fifty times. But suddenly there is going to be a breakthrough and in one dream you're going to be chased by your dragon or walking down the street or flying through the sky, and you're going to say "I'm dreaming."

After you do it once it becomes more recurrent. You learn how to shift your mind into that space that knows it's dreaming. In part this grows out of mindfulness practice. In part it grows out of this practice I've just advocated to you of awareness, noting when there is anger or fear that there is anger or fear, and asking "Whose is it?" When you do that enough times in your daily life, you start to do it in dreams. You're running from the dragon and you note in your dream "Feeling fear," and you ask "Whose fear is it? The dreaming self's fear, I'm dreaming."

That is it in capsule form. We will be going into much deeper details in coming weeks. I want to spend a short time each week talking about dreams. For now I would like those of you who do not record dreams to begin doing so and those of you who are already recording your dreams to simply try stating this intention when you go to bed: "When I dream tonight I intend to know I'm dreaming," and let me know what happens. That is all.

Discussion

Barbara: I've found that there is a big carry over, for me, as I've become more lucid in dreams. It's not that I change the dream so much by knowing that I'm dreaming, but I start to see the dream quality of everyday life, seeing how I'm getting caught in thinking that I am that person in the dream who's fleeing from something, or angry at something, or raging at something. It's not an intellectual carry over, there's just more awareness in my everyday life; I catch it much faster that I'm doing just what I do in the dream. I'm running from the monster, I'm raging at something. I'm stuck in this waking dream. I think it's the matter of the identification of self. When I free myself from the identification of self in the dream and realize that it's just a dream, that there's nobody actually running from the monster or whatever it's about, there's just an indescribable carry over so that in everyday life I'm much more aware when I'm identifying as self and that I don't have to do that. It's very powerful.

A question about a dream

Barbara: We are asked about a dream. Several times a year he dreams that he is escaping from some evil force; specifically he sees Nazis.

Aaron: I am Aaron. It's hard to say without hearing more specifics. But two different thoughts come to mind. You will have to ask yourself which seems most likely and applicable. First let me simply ask you, is what you are fleeing from usually masculine rather than feminine?

Answer: Always.

Aaron: When the other character in the dream is the same sex as yourself, it often represents an aspect of the conscious mind. So, one possibility—possibility because we don't have enough to say this for sure—one possibility is that what you are fleeing from is your own anger, irritation and/or fear. This Nazi represents the angry aspect of yourself and it frightens the peaceful aspect of yourself. You are afraid that it will overwhelm you, that it will take over. The best that you can think to do is to flee from it.

Another very different possibility is that there's some level of reality in this. I spoke of two kinds of dreams, symbolic and teaching dreams. A third kind of dream that we didn't get into tonight deals with memory, either from this life or past lives. Some of you have recurrent dreams about an unresolved issue from a past life. This does not mean specifically that you lived in that time when people were fleeing the Nazis. The Nazis could be a symbol for a dictatorship that you may have lived under a hundred, a thousand or five thousand years ago. It could be as recent as the Nazis. Sometimes people dream that they are fleeing from some large, wild animal. Animals sometimes represent habits in our dreams. Symbolically that person could be fleeing from what they view as a negative, destructive habit, feeling that they want to get out of the reach of that habit. Or, it could be that that person was chased in a very traumatic past lifetime by just such an animal and that there is much fear and hatred, much discomfort.

It seems useful to look at the first analysis first. Is this some aspect of myself that's chasing me? And if it's not, if that clearly doesn't seem to fit, then you might begin to ask "What do these Nazis represent? What is the Nazi feeling? What am I feeling in the dream? Might there have been something that was unresolved? Might this be a picture of that?" Do you have questions?

Another question about a dream

The dream is that I was traveling with a group of people. One was a woman I worked for. The second week we were traveling on a boat.

Barbara: Were you traveling on the first week?

Answer: Yes.

Barbara: Were you traveling compatibly together?

Answer: Yes.

Barbara: What does this women represent to you?

Answer: She is my boss. She is someone I enjoy working with.

Barbara: Is she someone you respect?

Answer: Yes.

Barbara: Give me a couple of adjectives that describe her.

Answer: She is like a teacher, I've learned a lot from her.

Barbara: Was there joy about the journey?

Answer: Yes.

Aaron: I am Aaron. Again, with these brief summaries of dreams I can only give you my conjecture of the meaning. You'll have to ask yourself if it fits. We begin with the symbols. Each being is an aspect of yourself. So, she represents both your boss, whom you respect, and that wisest and most mature aspect of yourself. Basically I see this dream as being about a spiritual journey. You as the conscious human are moving to embrace this highest aspect of yourself, becoming ready to embark on a journey with this aspect of yourself. A boat goes through the sea. Water is an essence of the life force. You're getting ready to move through the symbolic sea of life, the sea of wisdom. That sea works on many different levels. There is much joy about the journey. An expectation of learning and of growth. That is how I would interpret the dream with the information given. As I said, you will have to see if it fits. Are there questions?

D: I have a question not related to dreams. It has to do, somewhat, with the first part of Aaron's talk.

(Tape stopped.)

Barbara: The question is: can any thought or feeling about something be in the present, rather than being old mind?

K: He's talking about thinking and feeling about something that's happening now.

Barbara: D is asking about the movement from neutral into like or dislike and does that always take one out of bare perception and into old mind?

Aaron is asking me to speak a little bit about this first. There are many subtle stops along the way between bare perception, neutral and strong grasping or hatred. Comfort, discomfort. If I touch something hot there can be discomfort. I will not like the discomfort, it will remind me "This is painful" and that the appropriate response is to pull my hand away. But I don't hate whatever it was that was hot. The crux seems to be whether there is mindfulness or not. If there is mindfulness then you catch it at discomfort or dislike and it never turns into wanting to kick the stove. What makes us want to kick the stove? At this point I'm going to turn it over to Aaron.

Aaron: I am Aaron. I want to start with the question: what is bare perception? This is one we haven't tackled, neither here nor in the study group last year. At first glance it seems easy to define. What is bare perception? I'd like you to toss that around a little amongst yourselves and then I'll come back and speak about it.

M: Is it when you see somebody naked? *(Laughter.)*

Aaron: I am Aaron. I would have understood it a slightly different way. I would have thought it was when you saw that member of the mammal family that has long claws, sharp teeth and a hairy coat. Sometimes called a grizzly or polar bear. That is all.
(Laughter.)

M: It's the purest awareness of something identified as other than self.

Barbara: I'm paraphrasing Aaron who is asking if that means that there can not be bare perception during an experience in which there is emptiness of self? He is saying, does there need to be a self for there to be perception? Considering that there does not need to be a self to have awareness, must that self enter for there to be perception?

(Tape stopped.)

Barbara: To me consciousness implies a self to be conscious, whereas awareness is pure awareness, without any level of self. So in the deepest levels of meditation I still have awareness. There is nobody experiencing that experience, but I'm still aware that the experience is happening. There is nobody to register it as consciousness; there is the awareness ... Aaron is saying it's like taking the picture before you develop the negative. The picture is taken as pure awareness, but in order to get a print of it somebody has got to come in and develop the negative. So awareness is happening at the deepest level of meditation, but there is not consciousness of that awareness.

M: So awareness does not have to turn upon itself in order to be aware.

Barbara: No, it does not have to. It may.

M: Then what is it being aware of?

Barbara: It's being aware of everything arising and ceasing in this moment but there is not consciousness to register that it's being aware until the self comes in and remembers that awareness was happening. The photo is developed.

K: I was thinking about how animals are aware without a sense of self. There is awareness, but I'm assuming that you and Aaron are talking about awareness at a higher level.

Barbara: An animal is aware without being self aware as in an ego thinking about "me"—"I want this next," that kind of conscious thinking. But the animal is conscious, there is not a sense of self the way a human defines self, but there's a knowledge of hunger, for example, and a desire to do something about that hunger, and the animal hunts or grazes or whatever it may do. It's not just instinct, but it doesn't always think it out. It depends on the intelligence level of animal, but mostly it doesn't think it out, it just acts in appropriate ways. But that's not a level of pure awareness. Let Aaron speak to this briefly.

Aaron: I am Aaron. There are several levels here. We've looked at the difference between the newborn infant and a wise old man or woman. The infant is no less intelligent but it has not yet accumulated the insights that allow it access to its intelligence. You've heard me say that you are already enlightened, but few of you in this room are aware that you are enlightened. All beings have a god-nature, that of God within them. Most beings are unaware of that in themselves and others. That doesn't mean it's not there. But they haven't learned yet to rest in that space and relate to the world from that space. They haven't learned that they are awakened, not yet learned how to access that pure awareness. So, it's there but it's not used.

This is the difference, perhaps, between the animal, the unaware human and the aware human. The animal has a certain level of awareness and, as it evolves, a certain level of self awareness. Animals such as the pets in this house certainly have self

awareness. An ant walking on the doorstep has no self awareness. Do not mistake cognizance for awareness, they are very different terms.

Awareness as I would define it, pure awareness, means the ability to rest in pure mind, totally without involvement of the emotional or mental bodies, to rest in the nature of mind, the perfection of mind, to rest in that space where there is nothing that is not God.

Anything that you see from that space I would call bare perception, period. Most of you have had some experience with either sunsets or music, so pick the one that feels closest to you. Think of the difference between looking at the sunset or listening to the symphony with a mind that was checking the watch, thinking about what it had to do next, or simply allowing yourself to fully enter the experience of the sunset or the symphony to the point that there was no barrier between you and the sunset, there was nothing being played, nobody listening. There was simply music occurring, bare perception—nothing coming between you and that symphony, nothing coming between you and that sunset. Can you all experience that? That is all.

(Aaron now returns to the original question.)

Now, please remember that you are here in physical bodies, but you also do have emotional and mental bodies. If you stub your toe and there's pain you're not conceptualizing about the pain. In that moment there's pain. It's not that you're feeling pain because you stubbed your toe once, or a thousand times, before and there was pain. In this moment the physical body nerve endings are feeling pain. There's no emotion about the pain in the very first moment of it; there's no conceptualization about it. There is just the bare perception of pain. Now, let us coin a phrase—emotional nerve endings. Suppose you're sitting at your desk working; everything's fine. Suddenly the door slams and you hear a shouted curse at yourself. You feel the anger which has entered the room. The emotional nerve endings are feeling pain. You're not conceptualizing about that pain. You're not in old stories of old anger, in that moment there is emotional pain. And there is bare perception, not "This pain is happening to me," just pain. You and the pain are one.

Now, let's look through this process. The contact has been made with the emotional or physical nerve endings. At that moment there's bare perception. Consciousness notes that perception of pain, notes there's discomfort, pain. Discomfort is not emotional involvement. It is not ownership of the pain, nor aversion to it, it's just knowing there's pain. The mind knows that the physical or emotional body is experiencing pain. If it doesn't like that discomfort, then the movement goes from neutral, the bare perception of pain with no emotional involvement in it, to dislike.

That dislike does not always take you out of bare perception. It depends on what you do with the dislike. Dislike becomes the next consciousness. There's discomfort at the physical or emotional pain. There is a sense of the possibility of a self that could be harmed and beginning intention to arm oneself, to defend oneself. This is the beginning of solidification of self. Remember this is a flowing process. We can not label it in stages, although we are trying to. But it flows, it's a river not a series of pools and dams.

If there is bare perception of the new consciousness of dislike, not getting caught in the stories of dislike, not getting caught in "he shouldn't have done that," just awareness that dislike is happening in me now, there is still bare perception. There's no ownership of the dislike, there's no distinction "this is happening to me," simply "dislike is happening."

This is where most of you get lost, as soon as dislike is happening you assume it's happening to you, "I'm the one feeling threatened." Then you shift out of bare perception and into ownership, into old mind, into all the stories. This moves the dislike into anger, hatred and various forms of aversion.

May I suggest, D, that you're getting caught in analyzing it and that you would be putting your energy to better use simply to note, "Where am I shifting out of bare perception? Where is self arising? Whose disliking is this?" That's a good question because when dislike arises you are on the border of that shift from bare perception to old mind and if you can catch it there, just as bare perception of arising dislike, it doesn't need to go any further. Whose dislike is this? Where is it arising from? Those questions will carry you back into the bare perception.

If you practice it enough they will bring with them a reminder to have compassion for this being in whom dislike is arising. Remember, you don't have to get rid of the anger or fear. Whatever you're feeling is okay. Relax. Come back to bare perception. But do not cling to bare perception to the degree that it denies the arising of self and denies the pain that illusory self is feeling. This is that balance of wisdom and compassion—wisdom that knows there's nobody feeling this, compassion that knows, yes, but it is happening and it hurts. Does that answer your question, D? (Yes.)

Barbara: K is pointing out something which I've also observed. When we've had a dream and we just wake up, if we stay in that same position we are in (or if we've moved as we woke up, if we more back into that position) the dream comes back. If we shift to a different position, the dream is gone. Why?

Aaron: I am Aaron. I'm going to ask Barbara to do something for a moment. To say ... BOOO!!!! (*Said very loudly.*) Look at yourself very carefully. What is your physiological response? Some of you hearts beat just a bit faster. Some of you scrunched your shoulders, or your abdomen clenched. Each of you is different. Much of the physiological patterning of your body is habituated from past life experience. Some of you have suffered serious trauma in one or another part of your body, perhaps in connection with a loud and frightening sound. The area of the body that was injured most severely may carry blockages and tense more quickly at a loud sound. This is why some of you feel it in the abdomen or in the heart, head, face or shoulders.

In your dream you are very connected to the subconscious mind, and to the superconscious mind as well. To, let us say, that level of non-conscious, or other-than-conscious, awareness, which has closer recollection of past lives. It would be very interesting to see research on what I am about to say; I don't believe that it's ever been done.

Each of you has certain dream positions that key into certain kind's of dreams. If something is threatening you, you move in your dream into the protective stance that defends what to you is the most vulnerable part of your body. If you're experiencing joy

in dreams some of you open up in this way (*Barbara's body opening*); Some of you open up with your faces. Generally there's more of a straightening of the body, an openness of the body. But there are not necessarily universal movements. Some of you may experience a dancing in your joy so that in the dream one leg becomes extended as if it were pushing.

Because your body reflects what is happening emotionally and in memory, when you move back into that position you re-invite that particular memory. If you could relax enough while awake, you would find that certain positions invite certain images. This is one of the reasons why we emphasize the importance in meditation of sitting with the back erect, arms and legs relaxed. For some of you, if you assume a certain position in meditation you start to have certain kinds of images. The images are arising simply because they are keyed into that body position. Those of you who meditate regularly, watch this; notice the difference between the visual images you may receive if you sit erect or if you slump over, or hunch your shoulders with some tension. You're keying certain images to arise. You can start to become very aware of the way your body does this.

For a women, with a women's sexuality, when the legs are relaxed and open, as they are indeed when you're sitting cross legged, there is a certain opening of the entire body. A man often finds that opening comes more from squaring the shoulders, exposing the chest area. So there are many openings and closures which reflect your gender differences and your past life memories. Your dreams reflect all of this. So it's very natural when you move back into that position, you're inviting that memory to re-arise. You took that position in the dream in the first place because it coincided with that type of memory that was arising, the type of symbols and events. Does that sufficiently answer your question, K, or would you like me to speak further on it? That is all.

Barbara: M has just said she notices her body position creates dreams. I'm paraphrasing Aaron who says that you move into those positions because those are the dreams that need to come to the surface.

Aaron: I think that as a potential study, working with such as schizophrenics, simply by observing dream positions and then receiving dream biofeedback by different means, would help to ascertain which body positions are linked to more fear and which body positions are linked to less fear. In certain areas of mental illness it would be possible to work with a person, retraining the assumption of body position to gain some degree of control over the illness. (*Tape ended.*)

(One last question and answer. These are from transcriber's notes/memory, not recorded.)

Question: How does body position relate to lucid dreaming?

Aaron's answer: When you are lucid in your dreaming you can be aware of your body position, make a decision to change positions and see what effect it has on the emotions in the dream. Body position has no effect on the ability to dream lucidly.

A Private Session. Early October, 1993

(From Barbara's private work with Aaron, in journal, and from a private session. Early October.)

(I've chosen to include these instructions for those of you to whom they're of value. Through the coming months, Aaron repeats parts of these instructions and clarifies them for the class. Thus, they'll appear again in transcripts, broken down into smaller parts. Please skip this session if it doesn't interest you.)

... Finally, I was just sitting, feeling a sense of calm, resting in rigpa, with very pure and quiet awareness of everything, much light. Stayed with it for a long time ...

... Feeling strong spirit presences, very positive and loving energy. Strongest awareness was of NATURAL radiance of everything; resting in that radiance ("resting in" doesn't really say it, as it connotes separate "me" resting in "that." This was more a merging into, no boundaries, but fully at rest in that boundaryless radiance of which my own radiance was a part.)

Aaron began to speak, giving instructions as to next step in working with this light. He said he wants me to use this radiance as a tool of purification. Just DO now; we'll talk about it later. I've seen that while I rest in Rigpa there's no new karma created. Not only do I not create any karma while in rigpa, but old karma can be released. Aaron had said then that he would begin to teach me the process when I was ready. He says it's very hard to put in words; listed very basic steps: wants me to use this present intense energy/light. Instructions are paraphrased unless there are quotation marks.

-Clarify intention to do this for benefit of all beings.

-Rest in rigpa; must be stable.

-Invoke, visualize and rest in presence of a Master, guru, or such as the Buddha or Jesus.

-See (not a visual seeing but an inner sight (third eye?) seeing) the radiance in myself and this being.

-Again, rest in Rigpa, allowing the dissolution of boundary between myself and this being.

-Let radiance blend—"my" radiance and that greater radiance—"NO DOER: NOTHING DONE. Just ALLOWING that which has always been blended to be observed."

-Shadow/delusion/fear will stand out more clearly in contrast as natural radiance is seen brightened by merging with guru. What I'm seeing/experiencing is the clarity of my true nature with the superimposed negativity, fear and karmic distortions which are a part of that natural radiance. Not other than, but contractions/distortions of natural radiance.

-Completely undefended. No boundaries!

- Seeing distortion of fear/shadow/defendedness, release it. NO GETTING RID OF!
"There is nothing there which is not part of the natural radiance. It is attachment or

aversion to distortion which is released. The fear itself is seen as part of that radiance of pure mind and all reactivity to it is released. The contraction which held it is relaxed. Then negativity dissolves."

-Vital not to enter this practice until one rests in deep equanimity with all that arises. No getting rid of; no aversion, or practice will solidify self.

-Rest in that still deeper radiance. Step of reintegration.

Aaron: There must be no getting rid of the shadow. This must be done while resting in rigpa, releasing that which is seen clearly as resultant of delusion. This is not getting rid of but a willingness to let go. The clarity of rigpa does not allow ownership of the shadow; it sees how defilements attached, how skandhas arose, penetrates *moha*, sees solidified self which "owns" that shadow as manifestation of *moha*.

Seeing the reality and simultaneous lack of reality of the shadow, pure mind releases all attachment to it. You are literally cleansing old karma through the route of the cleansing power of rigpa. What was the attachment to that shadow? How did it arise? No intellect. If there is not immediate clear seeing, you are not ready for this work in this moment. Just let go of the light and move into vipassana practice, working analytically with the arising of any attachment or aversion.

With that first touch of mind, the shadow does dissolve, leaving you in rigpa with awareness of the shadow that had lingered. This is what you allow to clarify. Just let it go, literally. It is a way of working with actual light and energy, empowered by the energy of radiant pure awareness. I will go into more detail channeled through you with K. typing next week. It is hard to both hear this with pure awareness and type it with conceptual mind.

Please do this in the following order.

1. intention.
2. rest in Rigpa.
3. invoke presence.
- 4 .See radiance; note interbeing with radiance.
5. rest in rigpa; no boundaries. Do not go any further unless stable there.
6. seeing fear/old karma/negativity; if any aversion to these, stop here and work with it with vipassana or analytic Dz.
7. intention to release for the benefit of all beings. Why was there attachment? Seeing old mind.
8. release, like wisps of smoke rising And blending into the clear sky.
9. be aware of greater clarity of radiance.
10. repeat from #4. Cycle through as often as desired. Probably once or twice in a sitting.
11. when finished, end with awareness of gratitude to this teacher who is Buddha, (Christ) to everything which is Buddha, and dedication of merit.

Do this just a little at a time. Work with it briefly toward the end of each sitting. For now, do not attempt to do this practice out of formal sitting.

Barbara: That was all from Aaron. I sat for another half hour, then moved into this practice. Very powerful movement; strong opening of energy; old holding dissolving; awareness of power of this light/energy work.

I see the danger of it. Rigpa must be stabilized. There must be no aversion to the shadow, to any karma, to any old mind patterns. Perfect equanimity or one digs oneself in deeper. But done skillfully, so much can be released so quickly.

Side by side with this practice, Aaron okays use of mudra meditation to clarify energy meridians and release blockage. "Do this at different sittings, not simultaneous with above. Allow it to come together gradually. This is only the first of increasingly complex light practices we will do. Chakra work will be essential further on."

October 20, 1993

(Aaron is speaking to Barbara's questions about the reasons behind the practice he's been teaching her of purification with light perceived as natural radiance. Transcribed by Karen as it was channeled. No tape. Edited and clarified by Aaron.)

(Diacritical marks for Pali words are shown only for the first occurrence of the word.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. This practice essentially is a way to purify old karma, as you have experienced. It is also a way of releasing the "scars" of old mind and old energy blockage. In ultimate reality terms, that old karma is nonexistent. You're pure, have always been pure, but the mental and physical streams—*nāma-rūpa*—have grown out of the delusion of self which conditioned *viññāna*, and have manifested a relative reality. Within that relative reality the karma must be clarified. When you rest in rigpa there is total absence of the delusion of self. Few humans can maintain that clarity permanently while in physical body. The return to delusion is just another thought. It is not the arising thought of self which provides foundation for karma, but ownership of that thought. This is the moment of shift back into delusion.

It is tricky, subtle. As always, the key is awareness. When ignorance as *moha* arises and is recognized without identification with it, it dissolves. There is nothing sticky to it. *Moha* can be clearly seen for what it is. The arising of that delusion without dwelling in it, means it goes no further. No volitional formations need grow out of the delusion when the delusion is known as delusion. *Moha* itself becomes seen as part of that natural radiance of mind.

We have defined *sankhārā* as "all things that come into being as the effects of causes and conditions, and in themselves are the causes and conditions for the arising of other phenomena." You will remember that I disagree with the definition of *sankhara* as only those arising phenomena which create unwholesome, adhering karma. We have also discussed this in depth. It is not necessary that the arising phenomena lead to adhering karma for it to be labeled *sankhara*. There can be volitional formation on the relative plane, empty of self.

When we spoke of the twenty-four types of conditionality last year, we put them into two general categories, necessary and causal/contributory. The chain cannot be broken in the places of necessary conditionality. It was observed that to prevent the arising of rebirth or any phenomena one must move back to a place where the relationship is contributory. In any place where the relationship is causal/contributory and not necessary, you can touch the arising with awareness; if this is done, there is no new resultant adhering karma.

Delusion of self in which one is caught unaware leads to *sankhara*. and the necessary arising of *vinna*. Technically, here it is not the *sankhara* which is necessary condition to *vinna*, but *aññāna*—not knowing of the arising of *sankhara*. *Moha* arising and clearly seen also leads to *sankhara*. That which arises is the result of the causes/conditions of awareness of delusion; it gives rise to further causes/conditions. The result of this form of arising is liberation, not rebirth consciousness! Can you see that? In this case, we have a “benevolent” *sankhara*. This relates to the above definition of *sankhara*, with its relationship to adhering karma. We practiced at length with identification of these arisings. I know you both understand it. Please note that some teachers would not call this phenomena *sankhara*.

Once there is the arising of *vinna*, that bears a necessary non-reciprocal causal relationship to *nama-rupa*. Thus, if *vinna* arises, *nama-rupa* will arise. To create the cessation of the arising of *nama-rupa*, you must trace it back to *sankhara* and the prior ignorance which was condition for *sankhara*.

When pure awareness sees self arising, it simply smiles in compassion, but there's no one smiling and nothing smiled to. No duality, just delusion arising, compassion arising, clear awareness noting it all with no ownership of any of it.

So, when you rest in rigpa, which does not mean non-arising of thought and emotion, but non-ownership of that which arises—when you rest in rigpa, no new karma is created. But we must still contend with the relative being and its past karma. That is what this practice is about. We use that natural radiance which is manifestation of rigpa; and we use light-energy, in other words, both the radiance and the energy which is manifestation of that radiance. We use these as a way of releasing the self-perceived shadow. This release brings energy/light to a deeper clarity.

Let me offer a metaphor for the process. If you are largely a bucket of a radiant white paint and it pours out of you, that which pours out will be radiant white. But there are also small buckets of colored paint. As long as those colors are also there, occasional spill is possible. You may have learned how to keep the lids clamped tight. There are still those cans of colored paint. Those are the places of constriction and energy blockage. If you wish to express nothing within you but radiant white, you must harmlessly release the colors. It makes no difference if the colored paint is illusion. If there has been an illusory self who thinks the colored paint is there, then at some level there is reactivity. There has been constriction of energy to keep the lids closed.

If one reaches a level of pure awareness where no new karma is created, with all of the old adhering karma understood and under control, one must still deal with the old karma, the old colored paint. One must be aware that the existence of old karma creates blockage, and constantly work with it, or release the karmic scars that cause

contraction and blockage. While it is possible to live with awareness of the blockage, it is easier to release it. There MUST be no aversion, no getting rid of, only compassionate release.

Forgiveness dissolves karma. That's one way to release it. Some releases naturally in the *kriyas* (*physical releases of meditation*). Chakra work and mudra meditation with the energy meridians dissolves blockage. It is also released by working with light. This is a very powerful practice. It has been considered a more or less secret practice because it can so easily be misused and further solidify self, as I have explained. It must only be used when guided by a teacher who understands its use and can ascertain for whom it is appropriate.

Please note that all the above words are useless unless they lead to deeper experience. Mere intellectual understanding of dependent origination will never lead to liberation. We're going to shift tracks now. I want to try to express this process as I see and experience it. Then I want you to investigate it in yourselves. There are two aspects to explore.

First we will consider what arises in this moment without the additional influence of old karma. I see you as patterns of light and energy. There is much brilliance in that energy. Inevitably, there is also some shadow. The arising of discomfort experienced within the physical, emotional or mental bodies creates a contraction in the energy field. When you are resting in fully connected pure awareness and a thought, image, emotion, or physical sensation arises, if there is either strong comfort or discomfort in that arising the energy contracts. It contracts regardless of the level of awareness. The experience of contracting energy creates brief sense of separation. Within that contraction may arise the delusion of self.

When you move to ownership of the experience of separation, unaware of how it has arisen as a manifestation of pure mind, then we have a clear, radiant energy field in which there arises *vinnana*, created by ownership of those contractions. The ownership is the *sankhara*, resultant of the *moha* aspect of *avijjā*.

When you can notice the separation without owning it, ideally you return to connection and to pure mind. No new karma is created by the arising or noting of discomfort, or even by the noting of a move into separation and back out, only by aversion to that discomfort or sense of separation (*See Aaron's teachings on the interrelationships of comfort/discomfort, like/dislike, attachment/aversion, April and May 1993*).

I return to the words, "ideally you return to connection." Here is the aspect which is influenced by old karma. Before you had learned equanimity with arising, there had been reaction of anger, greed, jealousy and fear to these contractions. Or perhaps reaction of grasping, liking, holding. These have become imprinted on the energy field: they are spilled bits of paint. If they could just rest there, they would be no problem. It is the momentary identifications with them—a kind of adhesion to them—which create difficulty. "MY fear, MY anger, MY greed," and so on. There may be equanimity with the arising thought but non-equanimity with the contracting energy which accompanies the arising thought. The contraction itself is what is sticky.

Think of it as if you were on a giant slide. If you spilled some sticky substance on the slide on a previous ride down and were not responsible for the spill, did not clean it up, it would catch at you every trip down.

These old karmic residues are like bits of rough concrete over which you skate. It is easier to maintain balance on the smooth surface. Do you choose to note each approaching bit of roughness forever or is it not more skillful to get out the patch kit and smooth away the roughness?

In further metaphor, the old karma is sticky in another way. One can easily create new aversion or holding as one watches for the patches of rough concrete! One moves to avoid the rough place on the slide, moves to aversion. Old karma can easily send out new shoots. Thus, we speak of the need to constantly release those new shoots, but also to dig the karma out by the roots. Otherwise one is simply racing around watchfully releasing the offshoots before they, too, take new root.

What I see, then, is that where there is unreleased old karma, there are scars on the physical, emotional and mental bodies. These reflect the illusion of scar on the light body, or call it pure mind. Because of the scars, even with awareness the energy contraction is heightened when arising touches these sensitive places. Then the possibility of reaction to the contraction is heightened. The old karma literally pinches off the energy. The contractions experienced resultant of arising phenomena are heightened. The energy flow/light is lessened.

We work with the practice of releasing that shadow for two reasons. One is that we do literally release it, release the old shadow so that there is nothing there to take rebirth. The body becomes so light that at death it literally dissolves. You have heard of this dissolution manifesting as the rainbow body. For those of you not yet feeling ready to aspire to that rainbow body, there is still reason for this practice. You become used to dealing with the arising of thoughts by releasing them, not by getting rid of them, but by immediately knowing them as delusion and returning to rest in the clarity of pure mind.

How does such work effect rebirth? Let us take a hypothetical highly aware being who is dying. Perhaps there has been strong physical pain, dislike of the pain, and moments of judgment against that aversion to pain. This is all clearly seen. In the pure energy field there is this shadow. Suppose further that at the moment of death that judgment against aversion is strongly in that being's mind, just as a thought, "I should get rid of that." We have talked about the connection of *vinnana* and *nama-rupa*. That thought is the seed out of which the skandhas arise. It thus leads into a new birth—just that hairline of shadow.

Let us take that same hypothetical being who has practiced this so deeply that it is second nature. Pain arises. Aversion to pain. And there is a moment of shift into self. The being has learned to catch that simply by noting "thought," to see any tendency to ownership of that thought, and greet that tendency simply as another arising. If it has also worked with this practice, it is aware of the energy distortion caused by that brief getting caught by the severity of the pain. It simply releases it. Release rather than getting-rid-of is possible because it knows that the whole thing was delusion. It flows in and out. There never was anyone to own it nor anything to be owned. There is nothing to be gotten rid of, only a distortion of pure mind.

Furthermore, if it has worked with the release of old karma, there will be far milder contraction, which is resultant only of this present moment and not of old mind conditions. This practice then strengthens the ability to rest in rigpa, strengthens the ability to perceive distortion and greet that distortion with non-ownership, just a friendly "Oh, you again," and to recognize that the distorted material is also a manifestation of pure mind.

You wisely walk through the fall meadows in denim pants to which the burrs do not cling. If one does cling, there's no need for anger to arise, you simply notice clinging and brush it off, release it back into the meadow. As the pants become smoother and smoother, less burrs will cling. As you work with this practice and release those distortions, the energy is purified. Those old distortions serve as magnets drawing in new distortion. As they are released, there is less and less there to catch you. Rigpa becomes more stable. The heart is more open. The being lives less and less in delusion.

So this practice is twofold: a way of releasing old karma, literally; and a way of stabilizing your awareness.

We will now do this.

Dream Interpretation

These pages were offered as a class hand-out on October 20.

(Written by Barbara, as taught to me by Aaron.)

Introduction

There are two different kinds of dreams. Aaron delineates them as Symbolic dreams and Teaching dreams. Symbolic dreams are the more common, the dreams of most nights. Teaching dreams may employ some symbols, but within the core of them is the experience of sitting and learning with a wise teacher. In teaching dreams we are usually literally out of body, have traveled to the astral plane, and what we are experiencing in the dream is quite real. We are hearing a wise teacher. Our ability to benefit from that teaching, to retain it, relates to how well we have learned to remember dreams. If we've never practiced remembering and interpreting symbolic dreams, we'll often not remember the teaching dream's content, just a vague memory of having been somewhere and hearing something important.

When I first met Aaron, after a few weeks I was experiencing many teaching dreams. I could hear more accurately in the dream state at that point. But remembering was hard. I awoke one night after a vivid dream of sitting before a great teacher and hearing profound truths to hear Aaron say "You must assimilate this transmission of the Dharma." With that statement, all the content evaporated! What transmission of the Dharma? My mind was a blank, only knowing there had been something important. That was the night I became inspired to start regularly recording dreams.

When you've learned to remember dreams, the teaching dreams need absolutely no explanation. We'll talk here about symbolic dreams. I'm going to list the most common dream symbols on a separate page. Below are some basics.

Dream Interpretation

To begin, symbolic dreams exist on many levels. On one level they deal with the current situations in our lives. For example, there are many ways to symbolize helplessness. If you just injured your leg and are on crutches, those crutches may enter the dream. Why that symbol? Because it's "on top of" the mind, so to speak. Accessible. Given a dream in which you are a child and on crutches, feeling deep anger that others can run and play and you can't, let's look at the levels.

On one level the dream is about the current anger at the injury. But there are many current things to dream about. Why this one? On another level, the child represents a new or emerging aspect of the self; the crutches indicate helplessness. The dream is also about the fear you may be experiencing as a newer, more loving and trusting self emerges and lets go of some of the need to control that the old self maintained, but feels frightened and helpless.

Perhaps in the dream, an older person, teacher or respected figure comes to help the child. On one level it may be a wish for immediate help with the pain and inconvenience of the injury. On another level, that older person is a wise aspect of the

self; the dream states a level of trust in the presence of that wise aspect to guide the emerging, more loving new aspect. Do you see how it works?

In dream interpretation there are two basic rules. At this deeper level, every person in the dream is an aspect of yourself. There are specifics listed on the symbols page. Every dream is about the dreamer.

When you work with the symbol page and your dreams, I would suggest the following method:

- 1) List the components of the dream—people, objects, buildings, places, and the suggested symbolic meaning. Remember that these are *suggested* symbols and not absolute. If it doesn't fit, discard it. Trust your intuition.
- 2) After the list is complete, just sit and meditate. Let go of concept of what you intellectually think the dream means. Be with the feeling of the dream. Allow space for understanding to arise; it can't if you're trying to be logical. Dreams are NOT logical!
- 3) Write down a short summary of the dream and your final explanation. Keep a dream book. Start your own list of personal symbols, especially where they seem to vary from the more universal ones. We are each unique and dream in our own ways. These symbols are meant only to get you started.

Dream Symbols

People

All people in dreams are aspects of yourself. Below are the usual presentations.

- a being of the same sex is an aspect of conscious mind.
- a being of the opposite sex is an aspect of subconscious mind.
- a teacher, older and respected parent or other adult, or loving authority figure is an aspect of superconscious mind (higher self).
- a child is an emerging, new aspect of self.
- an adolescent is an emerged but not fully grounded aspect of self.
- specific people; what are the first characteristics you think of when you see that person—generous, greedy, kind, needy, angry, gentle? They may represent that aspect of yourself, the desire to become that, or the dislike of that in yourself. You'll have to decide by the rest of the content of the dream.

Vehicles

- small, personal vehicle (car, small boat, plane) = the physical body.
- large vehicle (bus, plane, train) = an organization, such as church, club.
- bike, cycle, skates equate with balance.

Buildings and furnishings

- bank = storage for valuables, storehouse of the sub or superconscious mind.
- furniture = tools of the mind; broken furniture = mind not grasping something; might equate with feeling inadequate to do or understand.
- garage = universal mind.
- house = the dreamer's mind. Different rooms = different parts of mind.
 - basement = unconscious or subconscious mind.
 - main floors = conscious mind.
 - upper floor, attic = superconscious mind.
- hospital = place for healing.
- school = place for learning.
- stairways lead to higher (or lower) levels of consciousness.
- window, looking into another level of consciousness.

Food

- food is knowledge. A restaurant is a place to find knowledge. Water = consciousness.

Body

- feet = spiritual foundation.
- face = identity. If no face, identity is confused. Appearance as another race than what you are in this body may also be confused identity.
- clothing = outward presentation, how you present yourself.
- naked in dream = either becoming more open and honest or helplessness. You'll have to decide by context.
- hands relate to purpose.

Miscellaneous

- storm = confusion.
- blood = life energy.
- killing someone in a dream; may be rage at first level. At symbolic level, anger at SELF! Wanting to change aspects of self.
- snake may be wisdom or kundalini energy.
- animals may represent habits.
- birds = thoughts. Dead birds are unused thoughts. Can't fly!
- trees, vegetation equate with subconscious mind.
- keys = key to resolution of issue or conflict within the self.

Dream Interpretation

- telephone relates to communication.
- the sound of a helicopter in a dream often relates to moving back into the body from the astral plane. Any loud, whirring sound indicates body reentry.

Wednesday, October 20, 1993

Aaron's talk

Good evening to you all. I am Aaron. I welcome the new friends who are here tonight. I would ask you to listen with your hearts. Let go of who I am and only consider, is what I am saying of value to you? If it is of value, bring it into yourself and make it your own; if it's not of value, discard it. It really does not matter where it comes from—whether I'm real or not—only, is this of value.

Last week I said that we would begin work with dreams tonight and I want to do that. But I want to start with the waking dream that you're all immersed in. Do you know the song, "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"? How about a rousing chorus of it. Everybody.

(We all sing together; laughing.)

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream, etc.

I won't subject you to Barbara's singing voice any further! Life is but a dream. In your nighttime dreams you frequently have bewilderment, tension, even fear and nightmare. I said last week that we would begin to work with what I call "lucid dreaming" which means knowing that you are dreaming when you are dreaming. Through lucid dreaming you may change your relationship to those monsters that frequent your dreams, change your relationship to your fear, anger or desire. You also begin to wake from your daytime dream.

Before we move into the practice at night, we must understand what lucid dreaming means by being aware of when we are dreaming in a waking state. By the waking dream I mean simply this: whose body is this that you're in? Is this who you are? Who were you before you lived in this body? What emotions or thoughts have you had in the past few minutes? Do you own them? Is that who you are? If that's who you are, what happens when emotions or thoughts dissolve and cease?

It's clear you are not your body, you are not your emotions, you are not your thoughts, you are not your perceptions ... or a particular way of seeing the world. The place where most of you get lost is with consciousness. You can understand that there's a stream of consciousness: you see the ways that your mind touches and relates to that which seems to be an external world. That is what you think you own and so you get lost in the dream.

Some of you have worked at length with me at uncovering a level of what we call "pure awareness." This is a space of relating to the world without any sense of a self who is doing the relating. It is a space of being that understands your deepest inter-connections with all that is, understands that you are not and never have been separate. And it understands that you are absolutely safe no matter what befalls the human incarnation. That which is the pure spirit body is safe.

This is not consciousness as that term is usually used. Consciousness necessitates a self—somebody who is conscious—and that's part of the dream. This seeing without ownership is pure awareness.

There are different ways to access that state of pure awareness. You can't grasp at it. That just creates more self—somebody striving to become purely aware, somebody striving to attain pure awareness. This pure awareness is your natural state, with nothing to be or attain. It is the space where you are when there's no defendedness, no dialogue with fear, no separation. It is the state of your innate perfection, that place where the angel or Godhead in you dwells, the space of perfect compassion, perfect wisdom, perfect generosity, truthfulness, patience, and so on.

We've been speaking in recent weeks of ultimate and relative reality. When pure awareness rests in ultimate reality, it knows that relative reality is a dream. But it also knows that it must relate compassionately to that dream. Once you begin to recognize the presence of the illusion in your waking life and can move back to rest in ultimate reality—not to perfect the resting in it, just to know when you are in that space of pure awareness even if only for a moment—once you can do that, then you are ready to move into this practice of lucid dreaming.

For those who have not yet grasped that distinction between ultimate and relative reality on an experiential level, the work that we will do here with lucid dreaming can be brought back into the awakened state helping you bring the dream practice into daily life. So it's interchangeable—it moves both directions.

I want to start with a brief meditation here—a series of meditations actually—that we will move through briefly because of the limited time we have together, but I hope you will take them home and expand on them on your own. My hope is that through these several practices I can help you to identify that space of being fully awake in this non-sleeping state, helping you sort out the ultimate reality from the dream. One fraction of a second of that pure awareness is all you need to be able to know: this is it! And then you will start to see it much more frequently in your life. It's always been there, those moments, of pure awareness, empty of self, that you had not learned to identify. So we start simply by identifying it.

Ideally, we would do this outside, gazing at the sky; but as it's a cold, rainy night, it seems more appropriate to sit inside and visualize the sky. I would like you to sit with your backs relatively erect. Your energy will flow more smoothly that way.

(Dots indicate pauses.)

Come with me to the beach ... See a broad sandy plane ... Sea grass is waving ...
There are beach plums and wild roses. Sea gulls fill the air ... Ahead of you is the sea ...

Feel the hot sun beating down, and a cool enough breeze that the sun is not uncomfortable.

Leave your towel and whatever else you carry on the sand and wade with me into the ocean, to water just waist deep. Feel the swells rising and lifting you gently off the bottom, then putting you back down again. Allow yourself to feel this wave motion ... gentle waves ... rising and falling ... lifting and putting you back down.

Lean back now into these waves. If you have space around you, you are welcome to do this literally and lie down on your back, or stay sitting, as you prefer.

Resting on the waves and feeling them lift you and lower you.

The sun is at a far angle in the sky. It is late afternoon so the sky above you is a clear brilliant blue. Here and there is a fleeting cloud. The sun is warm. The water is just of the comfortable temperature to cool you from the hot sun.

Waves rising and falling ... Look up into the sky.

As the waves lift you, notice your breath is also rising and falling ... Rising with the inhalation and falling as you exhale ... In the meditation/visualization, your eyes are open, seeing the sky.

As you exhale, follow your breath out ... Watch it! ... How far out does it go? Out and out and out ... Does it stop at the ends of the Earth's atmosphere? Is there any boundary there? On out to the ends of the universe, wherever that would be. No boundary.

Now breathe in. Yes, you draw the immediate air that surrounds you into your lungs, but is there any barrier? ... You draw the whole universe into yourself and then you breathe the whole universe out again ... Inhaling ... exhaling ... rising and falling, ever so gently on this very soft sea.

I want you to continue this for a few minutes at your own pace.

(Long pause.)

Feel the warmth of the sun, the gentle coolness of the water supporting you ... Does the sun stop at your skin? ... Can you feel its warmth deep inside? ... How about the water? ... What about the fluids of your body, your blood with a high salt content? ... all the body fluids ... Yes, your blood and the ocean water are different in chemical composition, but are they so very different? In some way, do not all the seas of the Earth flow through your body? ...

So, I want you just to float here, gently rising and falling with the sea ... within the meditation, eyes open, seeing the sky ... Visualize that sky. Use your imagination ... Feel the sun ... Feel the water ... Follow your breath out as far as it goes, and then draw it back in again ... Relax and notice how the boundaries fall away, how self dissolves ...

(Long pause.)

Is there even the barest moment where you cease to be someone doing this and simply become part of the universal flow of matter ... of energy ... of light? ... Just one moment of clarity ... One moment of feeling your deepest connection with all that is ... Breathing in the universe ... Breathing it out again ... One moment of bare perception ... Pure awareness ...

(Long pause.)

If a thought arises—such as the thought “Hey, I’m doing this right!”—a thought that returns self into the scene, don’t get upset or struggle with it or try to be rid of it. Simply notice, “a thought.” Like a cloud in the sky, here is a thought ... The perfect blue sky is

always there regardless of the clouds. Pure awareness is always there regardless of the coming and going of sensations, thoughts or emotions ...

(Long pause.)

Note that arising and simply ask, "Where did it come from?" "Whose thought is this? Mine? Who am I? Nobody." It simply arose out of the continuity of mind, the process of mind ... It is not my thought. I don't own it. Nor do I own the emotions or sensations that move through me ... Just thought, just sensation, just emotion.

What happens to that thought, emotion or sensation as you clearly perceive that you do not own it? Does it dissolve? Poof! It's gone. Catch that moment when it dissolves.

(Claps hands very loudly.)

Was there a moment there when Barbara clapped her hands and thought dissolved? Just one second of pure awareness and then the next arising. You can learn to identify that space. You can learn to rest in that space in which you finally see your true nature. Then new arising, greeted with the question, where did it come from? Whose sensation is this? Whose image? Whose restlessness? Nobody's. *(Claps hands.)* It's gone. And you come back for a moment to pure awareness.

You have all known this pure awareness, perhaps when you saw a sunset or listened to a symphony and there ceased to be subject and object for some moments. You and the music became one. You and the sky became one.

Resting on the sea ... Breath rising and falling with the gentle motion of the water ... Sending out your breath into the universe ... Breathing the universe back into you, And the sunlight on the water ... No boundaries ...

(Long pause.)

The water grows stiller, the swells are ceasing. Just floating on a calm sea ... Your body, floating, has turned in such a way that you face the sun. Brilliant light. Within that brilliance, I want you each to seek out that being who is the highest embodiment of truth for you—Jesus. The Buddha. Moses. Mohammed. Perhaps a living being. No boundaries. As you merged with the sky, allow your energy to merge with this beloved ...

(Long pause.)

Again, there may only be a moment of total resting in that energy and then the illusion of boundary and separation arises again. That's okay. Do not try to get rid of boundaries, just notice if they're present. They will go. Focus not on getting rid of boundaries, but simply coming back to that beloved energy over and over and centering yourself in it ...

Breathe your breath out into it ... Breathe it into you ... You may want to use your hands to do this, gathering with open arms the breath and the energy of the guru into yourself, then flinging your arms out, being careful of your neighbors here. Bringing it in, sending it out ... Aaaahhhhhhhh ... Exhaling the self into the beloved. No boundaries ...

(Long pause.)

If defendedness, fear or separation arise, note them with that same question: Whose fear is this? From where did it arise? Each time you ask, you penetrate a bit more the

delusion of ownership of all of these thoughts and emotions. Nothing to get rid of. ... Connected to the sky, the sunshine, the water, and the beloved. ... Allowing yourself to rest in that being's energy. ...

(Long pause.)

No trying, just expanding your energy outward ... Not willing it to happen, but allowing it. It is your natural state ... Breath, energy, expanding outward into the universe, into the master's, teacher's or guru's energy and light ... Breathing in and drawing it all back into yourself ... Boundaries dissolving ...

(Long pause.)

Now it is time to return to relative reality. In your meditation, gently lower your feet, touching the soft sand. Allow whatever connection there has been to continue, even to deepen. But as you begin to act and move, you will notice an arising of the more solidified illusion of self. No getting rid of that. It's a very useful tool. Someone must walk the dog and take out the garbage. But it's only a tool—your way of relating to this dream of relative reality.

You need this dream. That's why you chose incarnation. This relative reality provides the catalysts for your learning. There is no reason to shun it. But you must also come to know that this is not who you are. It is only the costume that you've put on for the period of the incarnation. And the world is your theater, your stage, your school for learning.

It is time to return to the beach. Walk slowly, being aware of any arising of separation ... Not trying to hold onto connection, but maintaining a sense of that connection, that the experience of connection was real and that you can allow yourself to move into that and can dwell more and more frequently in that pure awareness ... Come to the beach, dry yourself and we will end the meditation.

(Pause.)

There is no one here who did not rest in that space of pure awareness for at least a moment while I spoke. Some of you are more stable there than others, but all of you felt that space of connection: a moment of pure awareness that penetrates the dream, that lets you know who you are.

Later this evening, and in following weeks, we will talk about dream interpretation. This is another step to lucid dreaming. It is important that you are aware of your dreams and begin to remember them. Not only because analyzing them may be of help to you, but because it heightens the awareness of the dream process.

So, we have two components now in learning lucid dreaming. One is becoming aware of the dream in the waking state, which is much the same process you would use in the dream state. One is the future work we will do in interpreting dreams, getting you all to begin to write your dreams so that they're more clearly remembered.

The third component is the work we have done so much of here with mindfulness: being aware, moment by moment, choiceless awareness. When you are in a dream state—sleeping dream state ... *(Tape ends.)* (... are being chased by a monster.)

(Tape resumes.) ... by a monster and fear arises, the more mindfulness training you have done in the non-dream state, the more likely you will be able to be to incorporate

that training into the dream. But it is still not lucid dreaming. You may work skillfully with the monsters in your dream and still not be aware, "I am dreaming."

Here is where the practice we just did comes in. Our work in the coming weeks will be to strengthen and stabilize that moment of pure awareness. That is the homework I would give you in this coming week, to move to deeper awareness of ultimate versus relative reality and to allow yourself to rest increasingly in ultimate reality while seeing the human who does both get caught in the relative and need to work skillfully in the relative.

With these three components we will work toward this awareness, being able to say in a dream, "This is a dream." And then to work with it skillfully.

When you move from this plane—in your terms, die—consciousness as you have known it ceases, at least briefly, and there is a moment of pure awareness. If you have trained yourself to rest in that pure awareness, you find that you stay there while the body ceases. You will not identify with the content of mind, but will move very easily into that space of pure awareness. I will not speak at length now about why that is important, only ask you to trust my statement that it is important.

So that is one of the reasons why we wish to work with lucid dreaming. The other reason is simply that it is a place to practice. Some of you did this with me last year. When you are in a lucid dream state and being chased by your dragon, you know, "This is a dream. My physical body cannot be hurt by that dragon. I do not have to relate to it as I always have." I'm speaking here not only of seemingly real dragons but metaphorical dragons: the arising of rage or greed or jealousy in the dream.

You then can say, "I don't have to relate to it in the way I have in waking life. I am safe. If I face this would-be attacker and say 'no' in a loving way, my physical body cannot be harmed by this being's anger. This being is a manifestation of me which is just as it is in the waking state."

Yes, another's anger grows out of their reactivity, but they reflect you. If you rage, they are more likely to rage. If you're calm and loving, of course, that's no guarantee that they'll be calm and loving, but it opens the door to that possibility.

So, we practice this back and forth; in sleep, in waking. This is just the first introduction to it. We will be doing much more work with it, not every week, but throughout the year.

This has been a very long talk. I thank you for your attention. I will end here and let you have your break, tea and social time and then be glad to answer your questions. I would especially like to hear a few dreams, if any of you have them to share, so that we can begin to see how you may analyze these dreams. That is all.

Questions

(Aaron asked for comments on the meditation experience.)

(C talks about arising of self-judgment. Aaron asked: Yes, are you also aware that there was connection?" and C says, "Yes.")

Aaron: I am Aaron. What we are doing here is noting the judgment, thoughts, emotions, any of it and releasing it and coming back to the connection. In the past our focus has been much more on working skillfully with what arises. Now we're just saying,

"I don't own what arises. Let it go." And come back to connection. So it's a shift in focus.

That does not mean that that will always be the focus. Just for right now, I want to emphasize this shift in focus. Eventually, there will be a balance. We've been balanced in the other direction because it was so important first to establish strong mindfulness and to work with the sense of arising judgment and other heavy emotions in skillful ways. They were so powerful that they did not allow connection. Now most of you have reached the stage where connection is very tangible, at least for a moment. So, we're adjusting the balance. That is all. Are there other comments? Thank you, C.

(F talks about his sense of oneness with the ocean, especially an energy that he felt moving up his spine and a ringing noise. Aaron said jokingly that F has probably been a dolphin in past lives.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. While this is traditionally taught as "sky yoga"—moving out into the sky, expanding outward and sensing your unlimitedness—many of you find yourselves more able to expand outward in water because of the water content of your bodies. That's why I put this guided meditation into the sea rather than have you simply lie on the grass and look at the sky. If it works well for you, use it. You don't really have to know why it works, but that "why" is because of the water content of your bodies.

The focus here is on expanding outward and feeling the energy from that which is not really external to you move into you. If the sun works for you, do it with the sun. If the sky, do it with the sky. Or the sea.

The energy that you felt moving up your spine was the opening of the chakras as defendedness released and energy moved more fully through you. It is a similar feeling to the arising of kundalini energy, but much, much milder. Simply the chakras opening when defendedness is released. That is all.

(D talks about feeling similar feelings to F and feeling she came close to leaving her body.)

Aaron: Both of you did leave your bodies—briefly, not way out there. But there was movement out of the body. What you both felt was a combination of leaving the body and the opening of the chakras which is related. It's easier to move out of the body, to astrally project, when the chakras are open. The buzzing noise you heard, F, is related to astral projection. Usually it's a sound that you hear when you're reentering the body more than leaving the body. The pure tone that preceded the buzzing was what I would call the vibratory frequency of pure awareness. This which we call God manifests as Light and Sound. That is all.

D: When astral projection, why am I limiting myself and staying close to my body?

Aaron: I am Aaron. Thank you for this question, D. It feeds right into lucid dreaming. Let's call it "lucid astral projection." The fear here is of losing control. In order to leave the body, the chakras must be open to some degree, at least the upper chakras. When the lower chakras are still closed and the upper are open, there is a distortion. For most of you, it's easier to open the upper chakras than the lower.

We've talked about chakras here before, that the lower chakras govern fear, relationships, survival, sexuality. The upper relate to spiritual areas. Most of you have a

harder time being in the body and dealing with the catalysts of the incarnation than being out of the body, at least a little bit, or at least resting in the upper chakra energy.

When you astrally project and there is a strong sense of self, somebody who is doing it, you can't get very far because you're too caught up with being a doer. When you astrally project from a space of emptiness of self, from that pure awareness space, it's easier to lift out of the body. But there may be no awareness ... How can I best phrase this? As you move out of the body, there is immediately a sense of, "Hey, that's my body," looking back down at the body, which calls back the self. And then you reconnect into the lower chakras and the fear. Self solidifies and you come back again.

In what I've jokingly called "lucid astral projection," awareness knows that there is pure awareness, that you are resting in ultimate reality. That stage of pure being makes an aware decision to release the body, knows that is a body without saying, "I own that body," just relaxes and lets awareness rise out, move out. There's no attachment to the body because from that level of pure awareness attachment is impossible. Then there's no fear. You know that you are safe, that the spirit body is safe, that the physical body is safe. And you simply allow that expanding awareness to continue to expand. Really, astral projection is just an enhancement of expanding outward.

As for specific suggestions, this all works together and as you practice any aspect of it, it aids in the practice of other aspects. The starting place is identifying these moments of pure awareness, however brief they may seem and beginning to stabilize the ability to rest in them. Then you will be able to move into lucid dreaming. You will be able to move into astral projection.

Start simply, not grasping at lucid dreaming, nor astral projection, nor opening chakras, just allowing pure awareness to be there and paying enough attention to identify those moments and rest there without any fear, "I'm going to be pulled out of this in a few seconds." However long it lasts, it lasts. It will stabilize. That is all.

M: This sounds like when you realize that the heart is open and close it up a bit right away out of fear of not staying open, rather than resting in the open heart.

Barbara: Exactly. When you realize, "Oh, feeling fear!" and you tense with the thought: I've got to get rid of the fear! You can't reopen your heart from that place because self solidifies. The process of seeing how self solidifies is what finally dissolves the solidification of self, whether it's an astral projection or in dreams or in opening your heart in skillful relationship with others.

C: I'm interested in learning about different levels of light body: the physical body, the astral body, the etheric body. How do those bodies relate to astral projection and no-self?

Aaron: I am Aaron. We need to do a drawing of this to accurately present it. I will be brief tonight and perhaps next week we can go into it at greater depth. We've identified here many times the physical, emotional, mental and spirit bodies. We've talked less about the astral, etheric and light bodies. The astral body for the third density being is everything but the physical body. The physical body is not specifically part of the astral body. When you project into the astral plane, the emotional, mental and spirit bodies leave the physical body and simply move into the astral plane. The

tie-in with dreaming here is that most of you frequently astrally project in your dreams. You're usually not aware of it. But you do move out of your bodies in your dreams.

I'm not going to get into details of what the etheric and light bodies are tonight. We'll save that for another time when we have more time and when Barbara has prepared some drawings.

As long as there is ownership of the emotions and thoughts, astral projection is difficult because they become something solid that grounds you back into the body. These emotions, this body, these thoughts: they all come together like a magnet. When there is equanimity with thoughts and emotions, space around them and non-ownership of them, astral projection becomes much easier.

Why astrally project? Is it simply a toy to play with or is there value to it? Of course, it can be used as a toy. Ideally though, it connects you deeper with your true self because while you are on the astral plane, as M just pointed out, if there's fear that says, "Ohhh!" you pull back into your body. While you are on the astral plane without identification with this physical, emotional or mental body, there is very pure awareness. Then, the astral plane becomes a place to stabilize that awareness.

I'm not joking when I speak of lucid astral projection. Ultimately, astral projection can only be lucid because as soon as we bring a consciousness, a self-consciousness, into it, it ends the projection, pulls you back. The more you practice in both ways—finding equanimity with what arises consciously in your life in relative reality, and stabilizing ultimate awareness—the easier it will become to astrally project and the easier lucid dreaming will become.

In past weeks I've been talking a lot about balancing the weight on both feet: the wisdom of ultimate reality that realizes that this body, this world, this is not real; and the compassion of relative reality that knows it doesn't matter whether it's real or not, I must attend to it lovingly. I mentioned several weeks ago that our work up until now has been weighted toward working skillfully in relative reality because it was necessary, for most of you, to learn that before you could begin to consider the ultimate. Now we are learning to balance: weight equally on both feet.

There is no aversion to the relative world with its suffering. There is no clinging to the ultimate as a safe place in which one may avoid suffering. But there is that blending of wisdom and compassion which enables you to deal skillfully and lovingly with the world while knowing it's a dream. This is the same thing you are learning to do in your dreams, not to say, "Oh, it's only a dream," but to deal skillfully and lovingly with whatever arises in the dream while knowing that it's a dream. C, does that answer your question? (Yes.)

(We shift to talking about dreamwork.)

M: Are we going to have dream classes out of body, all sitting here floating around on the astral plane?

Aaron: I am Aaron. I'm already here, M. You're welcome to join me any time. That is all.

(Barbara discusses basic dreamwork techniques using the handout as a guide.)

(Someone shares a dream for us to work on together.)

Audience: I dreamed a white mink-like animal was crawling around on my body and I felt somewhat frightened by it. It had beautiful fur, very soft and very pure white. Someone standing nearby said that if one were to put a mirror in front of it, it would become calm. It was a very vivid dream.

Barbara: Okay, so we start with an animal, white mink, fur. It was crawling around on the body. Was the body clothed or unclothed when it was crawling around? Who said to put a mirror in front of it, was it a man or a woman giving that advice? Was the mirror actually put there and what happened? Symbol of the mirror. Symbol of the mink. Symbol of the other person. Symbol of the self. Were you experiencing yourself in the dream as yourself in your present body or in an opposite sex body or what kind of body?

So, we start with writing down the basic items in the dream and the symbols that would seem to apply. If you look at that symbol and you say, "No way!" then don't bother to write it down. If it really feels wrong, fine. Then, having created the list for yourself of what these items might mean, you begin to meditate. Let go of conceptual mind. Let go of trying to figure it out. Let your own deeper wisdom provide you with the answers. The answers are not going to come by intellect because dreams aren't logical. You can't figure out dreams in a logical way. You've really got to trust your own intuition about them. So, use the sheet of symbols just as a starting point.

Remember that the dream is a message from your subconscious mind. It's usually related to some issue that you're working on and struggling with. You may not be comfortable with what the dream is telling you. If it was easy to understand that, you'd understand it in your conscious mind already, so it's something that you've pushed down into the subconscious because at some level there's some discomfort about knowing about it. It's a place where you're growing. So, it's very important to be very gentle with yourself, to open to the material in the dreams as non-judgmentally as you can.

Let's start with this dream about the mink-like animal.

Aaron: I am Aaron. What I am offering here is a traditional interpretation of this dream. You are each unique. The traditional interpretation may or may not fit accurately. The dreamer will have to decide that.

The symbols. Animals often represent habit. White is a color of light. "The fur was soft. If one were to put a mirror in front of it, it would become calm. It worked." A mirror is a way of seeing deeper into yourself. So here we have a habit (animal) with which the dreamer is not quite comfortable. It's a bit agitated but it's very appealing. White, soft. Perhaps it is ... When I say "habit" one need not think of a negative habit. Because of the whiteness and softness of the coat, I think that there is a habit being looked at of moving into deeper patience or generosity or loving kindness, but there's discomfort about that: Can I really do that? Put a mirror in front of it and it will calm down. Begin to look at the reflection of this in yourself and see that you can stabilize this energy, this patience or generosity or loving kindness. You are in control of it. Allow the fear to dissipate.

Beyond that we would need to personalize the dream by speaking with the dreamer, asking questions, seeing if this feels right or if not, what parts of this interpretation feel

wrong. Discard whatever feels wrong and ask, okay if that's not what this symbol means, what does it mean? And then let go of conscious thought and allow yourself to feel what it means.

Mirrors and keys are very powerful images in dreams. A key opens the door to a path you have been trying to travel. It's very empowering. A mirror symbolizes self-honesty in dreams. You are looking at the reflection of the pure self ... *(Tape ends.)*

Wednesday, October 27, 1993

Aaron's talk

Good evening and my love you all. I am Aaron. Sometimes I think I need a new opening line, that it must be getting a bit tedious. But, frankly, I can't think of any clearer way to say it.

There are several things I want to speak about tonight. A bit of this and a bit of that pulled together. Several of us were talking earlier today about the light body, and about your innate perfection and the ways that everything that arises—your joy, loving kindness, generosity and patience, as well as your anger, fear, jealousy and greed—everything that arises in you, is a reflection of that perfection. How can that be? This is what I want to explain with a bit more clarity and depth than previously.

You've heard me often say that there is no duality. I want Barbara to do something that will take her hands and eyes, and then I will return and we will talk about it.

(Barbara holds out a new, clean sheet of paper.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. I want you to just breathe, relax. SLAM! *(Barbara claps her hands hard.)* Can you feel your energy contract just a bit? A louder noise would have created a stronger contraction. You knew there was no real danger. Still, there was contraction. When your energy contracts in response to any physical sense touching a sense object and creating discordance or discomfort—hearing a loud noise, seeing a bright light, touching a hot stove—what I see appears like that clean white sheet of paper contracted. *(Barbara crumples up the sheet of paper.)* Energy is squeezed together in this way. *(Barbara now opens up and smooths out the paper.)*

I want you to visualize the light body as best you can. Your energy, the energy that moves through this physical body and the energy of your aura, are manifestations of that light body and of the natural radiance of the light body. You have heard me say that you are energy and light. First you are Energy; the Energy manifests as light, the radiance of the light body, which is the perfect template for the physical manifestation.

You cannot contain all the energy of the light body in any single incarnation. The body contains a bit of that energy. We once used a metaphor of the sea as God or Source, a hot water tank as the soul, and a cup of water drawn from that tank as the individual. Since the characteristics of each tank and each cup are different, you are each unique, but the material within you is the same—the same water from the sea, or more precisely, the same energy, manifest as light. This water tank, then, is the light body. Its light is manifestation of the full energy of the spirit body. Within the teacup of the physical body is the reflection of that light, and also the portion of energy that being contains, which we will call the energy body. It is the perfect sheet of smooth white paper. I will talk more about this in a future week.

When there is jarring from any of the physical senses, the energy body contracts in the way you have felt. The paper crumples. If you are unaware of that contraction you are pulled into reactivity to it. You might become defended, fearing you're going to be attacked. You may yell at another. You may simply feel strong fear or anger.

You are responding to two things. First is the threat of being hurt, which sends you back into a sense of separate self. You're also responding to the contraction in the energy itself. Electricity does not flow in quite this way, but if I had some way of squeezing the electric cord in this lamp so not as much energy came through, you can imagine that the light would become dimmer. In essence, your body energy becomes dimmer. Because this happens over and over again and much of it is left untended, a systemwide blockage develops throughout the physical body.

Also (this is going to take some explaining; we will not get it absolutely clear tonight; we're just beginning this) remember that each of you has a light body, which is the perfect blueprint out of which the physical body is replicated. By perfect blueprint I don't mean the physical body comes out looking identical every time; it has it's own genetic structure. For reasons which I will explain at a later time, contractions of the physical/emotional/mental body leave a reverse imprint as scarring on a projection of the light body, like the wrinkles in this paper. (*Barbara crumples paper.*) The metaphor with the paper is not perfect, but it will do. Each of you saw the perfect, smooth paper before it was crushed. Within this wrinkled piece of paper is the perfect, smooth paper. The potential for that paper, the blueprint (that's the closest word I can give you) for that piece of paper, is still there. If one were to iron it, one would again have a perfect, clean, unwrinkled piece of paper. Even more, **the perfect, unwrinkled paper still exists!**

What I am describing is very difficult to convey in words. I am offering here the closest words can come to an experience which each of you are going to have to investigate for yourselves experientially. Untended trauma creates scars in the light body. The scars are illusory scars and yet, on the relative plane, they seem real. Can you all see that within the wrinkled piece of paper lies the perfect, unwrinkled piece of paper? Within the somewhat illusory scars on the light body is the perfect light body. The scars are illusion and yet when the human manifests the energy blockages in the physical body it manifests scarring in the light body in those areas of physical body blockage. These are karmic blocks; that's the closest I can come to it. This is why some of you are prone to back ailments, migraine headaches, stomach ailments, weak knees, or a shoulder that becomes disjointed easily. It's not just that that area was injured and has become weakened. That area was injured because there was already blockage in it and it was weak to begin with. So when you fell, that's the part that accepted the injury.

Another night we will explore what this means in terms of karma.

We work on two levels. One is working with the physical body. Something we will be getting to later this year is working directly with the light body. We're not yet ready to begin working with it, I'm only mentioning it here. What I'm doing tonight is planting some seeds, and as those begin to grow we'll work with them through the following months. We have spent much time here talking about working skillfully and lovingly in the physical body, in relative reality, with the emotional and physical manifestations of fear. My emphasis here tonight is to give you a different perspective. It's something that I've been talking about in one way or another all of the past month. You have two feet. Your weight has been on the relative reality foot. I want you to begin to see that perfect sheet of paper more clearly in yourself and to relate to the world more frequently from that space of perfection. This is not denial of the wrinkles. It's only the clear understanding that beyond those wrinkles there is the perfect, radiant, unblemished

self. When I speak of self in this context, I don't mean a personal self, but the universal self, the aspect of you that is totally connected to all else.

So I've been spouting some theory at you. Let's move now to the practical. I want to talk about fear again. The reason I work with fear so much is that it is universal. Some of you may have not felt strong physical pain today, a sense of loss, jealousy or strong desire, but I highly conjecture that everyone has felt some kind of fear. We have spent endless hours here talking about working skillfully with fear. You've all heard me say to you that you have two choices, fear or love. Out of that statement some of you have formed the misconception that there is a duality between fear and love, that if you choose fear there's no love in it, and if you choose love, fear is cast aside. But, there is no duality. Fear is simply a distortion of love.

When you are resting awareness in this perfect self, in the natural radiance of the light body, and furthermore allowing that light body to rest in, let us call it the universal light body, resting in that space of total emptiness of separation, then there can not be any fear. You may feel burning by touching something hot, or hear a loud noise, or see something startling, but when there is awareness of feeling discomfort you don't move into a sense of separation. You remain in that universal, non-separate state.

When there is not awareness of how discomfort arose and the ways it moved to disliking, or comfort and liking, then there is contraction in the physical and light bodies. It is not useful or necessary to ask which contracts first. There is simply contraction. When there is no awareness you move into the distortion of fear because there is a desire to protect this suddenly self-perceived separate being. You wish to protect this being out of love for it. The fear is a distortion of universal love, grown out of the delusion of a self. It results from the desire to protect the illusory self. So, fear is a distortion of love. When I suggest, then, that you can choose fear or love, what I am suggesting is that you can choose distortion or clarity.

It can't be a conscious choice which says "I will not be afraid," because if fear arises, fear arises. When there is awareness of how that fear arose, of the delusion which fostered it, then it dissolves on its own and clarity returns, love returns, a love that does not separate into self and other. Thus, the real choice is awareness or nonawareness.

We've talked about the ways to work on the relative plane with fear. Most of you here have heard me talk about this many times. Tonight I want to offer a new addition to that work. You can not simply say "This is illusion." It may well be illusion, but on the relative plane you're being threatened, there is a snarling dog and he's standing ten feet from you with his lip curled. Of course there's going to be fear. It is no illusion that the physical body can be harmed. When you know there is fear you're not going to need to be reactive to that fear. On the relative plane, of course, it's the best response. If you run from the dog he's far more likely to chase you than if you calmly say to him "No" and slowly walk backwards away from him. So your panic is not going to preserve the physical body.

Knowing that fear is an illusion, that it is a distortion of love, if you can re-connect to that place that we might call the angel in you, the perfect radiance of natural, pure mind, that perfect blueprint of who you are, when you can return to that level of awareness suddenly there is clear perception of how the whole thing is moving through you. Instead of panic or disdain for the human who's feeling fear, there will be an

openhearted washing over of compassion for you and for the dog. Both of you are feeling fear; he wouldn't be snarling if he wasn't feeling afraid.

Out of that compassion and clear seeing—yes the fear is illusion and yes, the physical body is being threatened—out of that space comes skillful action. Not only is it skillful but it will be free of adhering karma. The change in emphasis that I'm offering with this then, is that I want you all to begin to recognize this naturally perfect aspect of you, not just to glimpse it here and there, but to really begin to identify it, constantly, as it arises, and to find the ability to come back and rest in that awareness.

Occasionally it's useful to introduce a foreign word, when that word most clearly defines that for which English necessitates five or six or ten words. Karma is such a word. It's so familiar to most of you that it might as well be an English word. I want to introduce the word *rigpa* to you. This is a Tibetan word. It means pure awareness. The best I can define rigpa is that it is **that state of pure awareness of the light body when it rests in the universal light body and is completely empty of any delusion of self. As pure awareness, it perceives truth as absence of all duality. Since there is no duality in rigpa, it's not just mind, but the totality of all that is, the energy in which mind rests as well as the mind itself.**

Rigpa is not an experience; it is a natural awareness. It is the pure paper before there were any wrinkles in it. No matter how many wrinkles you put in the paper, that pure paper is always there. I want you to learn to recognize this pure state in yourselves, and to stabilize it so that it gives you a strong foundation from which you may look at fear, anger, greed, or any heavy emotion, and begin to better balance your weight between relative reality, which must respond skillfully to the relative catalyst and ultimate reality, which sees the catalyst as illusion. One might say about this dog, "It's all illusion, but if I run I'm going to get bitten." Both are true. It can not be simply dismissed as illusion, it can not be acted on as absolute reality, otherwise you reinforce the wrinkles. If you start to think "This is who I am, this person being threatened by that dog and there's nothing more here," fear, anger and defendedness increase and the wrinkles get ironed into the paper. When you remember that beyond all of this perceived threat there is that wrinkleless piece of paper, there is that pure self, you iron out the wrinkles.

Several of you are feeling confusion, asking "What is this pure awareness?" It is the way you are when you are listening to a symphony and at a certain point you are so fully with the music that there stops being a symphony and a listener. There's no subject or object anymore. You and the music become one. That's rigpa. Watching the sunset can be the same thing. At some point you stop watching the sunset, there's just sunset happening. The sunset is occurring and it's being seen, but there is no object and subject, just sunset. I know you can think of many more examples.

Perhaps I can lead you to another example. I'd like you to breathe with me, just inhaling and exhaling. Deep breath. I'm not going to direct the inhale or exhale, I want you to do it at your own comfortable speed.

Deep inhalation, deep exhalation ... Watch the breath moving in and out ... Feel it at the nostrils, as attentive to it as you can be ... Now, not while I'm talking, but when I stop, with the next inhalation after I've stopped, I want you to pause for a moment

before you exhale. Not too long, just a fraction of a second. Instead of seeing inhale, exhale, I want you to see inhale, stop, exhale. Do that now ...

(Pause. We do this.)

If the stop is not too long there is not space for any thought or sensation to enter. In that moment there is rigpa, pure awareness. The pure, radiant mind. So you carry this with you all the time. It's not something you have to become enlightened, or do anything special, to experience. It is your natural experience.

You are constantly cut off from it by the arising of thought, emotion or sensation, fixation on what has arisen, ownership of it, and the ensuing thought, "I must get rid of the thought or the physical sensation or the emotion, to come back to this space of perfect quiet, perfect peace, perfect clarity." But rigpa transcends arising and stillness. Pure mind watches it all, still or in motion.

When I say that fear is an illusion and is no different than love but just a distortion of love, so is any thought or emotion or sensation. You do not have to get rid of fear, nor of any of it. You begin to understand it all as part of this natural radiance of mind. It changes your relationship to what arises in you.

We've talked a lot here about not getting rid of those heavy emotions and thoughts but allowing them to dissolve. We've worked with them primarily from the relative reality plane. Now I want you to begin to see that just as fear is a distortion of love, any thought, any emotion, is simply another aspect of that natural, pure mind. There's nothing that needs to be gotten rid of. If the emotion arises, it will go. **You do not create new adhering karma because emotions arise or because thoughts arise. The karma grows out of your reactivity to that which arises.** We've been practicing equanimity to what arises here for a long time. Now I want you to begin to expand your awareness of that which arises so that you can more fully embrace it, seeing that the anger, the greed, all of it, really is okay. It's just part of this natural radiance of light. We could take this crinkled paper and label one wrinkle anger, label one jealousy and one worry or desire. It can all be ironed smooth. It's all within the perfect flat piece of paper.

I repeat that what I am talking about is very hard to grasp with conceptual mind. I can not share my experience with you, I can only share the concept through words, but the words really don't carry it. We have here tonight a group of people most of whom have worked with me for some years. You have developed strong meditation practices. To understand this you're going to have to move into it on an experiential level. I do not exclude those who are new here tonight. You can do this also. If you do not have the foundation of a meditation practice, it will be harder. You can begin to understand it on a conceptual level and as your experience deepens it will make more sense.

Let's do that breathing exercise again. Breathing in and out. When you are ready, take a deep breath. Pause for a moment and then exhale. Do it several times. See if you can catch that place beyond arising or stillness.

(Long pause while we practice.)

And then a thought may arise, "Oh, I've got it!" and the thought "Oh, I've got it" ends that resting in rigpa, **not because thought arose but because a self arose to own the**

thought! There's self coming back again, somebody to have gotten it. You just exhale and go ahead and do it again.

What I would like you to do through the coming week, whenever you're in a situation where you're feeling fear, anger or any strong emotion, is not only to come back to your breath, but to come back to it with this specific process: inhale, pause and focus on that pause, exhale. Inhale, pause, exhale. I want you to do that four, five, ten times within that time of tension. See if moving to that space of rigpa, to that pure mind awareness, gives you more space for whatever is the catalyst for the fear. Watch what happens, takes some notes if you want. How does it effect your anger when you do this? How does it effect your desire, your impatience or your fear?

I've done something very different tonight than has been my usual practice, not giving a talk about one subject, but teaching you a process. This is not something that you're going to get in one night, or one week or one month. It's going to be a foundation for much that we'll be working with this year.

Questions

(We began by hearing a dream that A had brought in. The dream was written down and is presented below in its entirety.)

The dream: I was supposed to go on a cross country bus trip with my friend, P, from Ann Arbor to Kansas City. I know we were doing a bus trip because we were both pretty poor and couldn't afford to go any other way. I was late getting to the bus station. As I arrived the bus I needed to take was getting ready to pull out of the station. I waved it down and asked them to wait just a minute so I could get my ticket. I then went to the window and asked for the woman to hurry issuing the ticket, but I couldn't remember where I was going and had to yell to my friend on the bus to get clarification. The woman behind the counter began asking what seemed to me interminable questions. It took so long that the bus finally left. I'm frantically blurting out that the bus is leaving—hurry, hurry—and she says "Well, you'll have to catch up with it. It stops in Toledo, you could leave your car there." (I had brought my Honda down.) Next she is trying to help me calm down (I really don't want to leave my Honda in Toledo—nor do I want to buy a ticket with no assurance that I can catch the bus) and suggests that we go out for a cup of coffee. As we are out getting it, she says to me that she really can't take a check for the bus fare, didn't I have cash? And I proceed to say that, no, I didn't, and to show her how poor I am I pluck my old worn wallet out and open it to show I have nothing, but it's full of cash! I am surprised by this because I pull out a bill and it's a 20. Anyway, we get our coffee and start to walk back up the hill from First St. going toward town, and as we look up there is, in the sky, what appears to be a black lunar eclipse (it is day). There is a black orb, spinning, with some sort of crescent around it, and as the "sun" begins to come out, the orb turns from black to blazing white and then dissipates like light rays going off to the four corners. Now, in place of the orb is the picture of a polar bear, which is there for a moment and then gone. Everyone in the area had stopped to watch this. Then, as we continue on up the hill, we see what appears to be someone in a polar bear suit, which turns into a woman with a polar bear pelt (?) with the head coming up over the top of hers. I then begin to hear music—very lively and joyous, and my companion begins to

talk about another woman she knows whose music and performance are so wonderful that you can't take your eyes off her—and her right eye becomes a little green jewel and dances up and down as if following someone's music, while the left eye continues to look at me. (The phone rang in this plane of reality.)

Barbara: The process of interpreting a dream is to take all the symbols that you've got and write them down. It doesn't matter if they seem right or not, just write it down. Let go of "this is right, this is wrong." That discernment comes into the second step of it. What is the most common symbol? If you write down your dreams you start to become acquainted with your personal symbols and may replace some of the universal symbols with your more personal symbols.

So, the bus: an organization, church, club. A small personal vehicle that she didn't want to leave parked in a strange city: the physical body. I don't have money on this list of symbols we've prepared but money is a way of obtaining something that we want. It's a tool, a key. Animals are usually habits. Often, but not always, white is equated with good, black with shadow, anger and so on. So a white polar bear is likely to be a good habit, a habit that you want to nurture. Clothing, the woman in the polar bear suit, is an outward presentation; how you present yourself to the world. So, there is a desire to present oneself in this good habit. At one level every character in the dream is an aspect of yourself. The woman at the ticket office who's quieting her down is an aspect of herself. Because it's the same sex it's an aspect of her conscious mind. The woman in the polar bear suit is another aspect of conscious mind. Different aspects of conscious mind. At that point, after you've got all the symbols, you sit and just meditate with it. I'm going to let Aaron give you his presentation of what he thinks the dream is about.

Aaron: I am Aaron. First of all, she's going on a trip. A journey is symbolic of your spiritual journey. Of course there are many levels to this. If you are catching an airplane in the morning it's possible that there will be some anxiety—"Will I get to the airport on time, I've got to leave at five in the morning for a six-thirty flight." So that may enter your dreams. We must account for that in the dreams as well. But that's self explanatory. We're taking the dream to the deeper symbolic level. On that level the travel is part of a spiritual journey. It's a cross country trip—it's a major journey.

While in the standard list of universal dream symbols a large vehicle like a bus is a club or organization, that doesn't seem to fit right here. One must be careful not to pin the universal symbols on, but to ask, "Does it fit?" She's afraid of missing the bus. Perhaps the bus in this case is more of a spiritual community or group. Not necessarily this group. It may be a looser structured spiritual community. It may be simply a different aspect of her spiritual work. She's afraid it may leave without her, she can't remember where she's going. She has to ask her friend "Where am I going?" There is resistance from one aspect of conscious mind to recognizing where the journey is going.

She doesn't have money, just a check, a piece of writing, no real money. Then it turns out that she has a lot of money. This is speaking to me of resistance. There is some fear of giving herself fully to this journey on which she is departing. She is surprised to find that she has that much money. This is a new presentation of the self, an awareness that she does have this much courage, strength, sense of responsibility and focus. To me that's what the money symbolizes in the dream. When she looks deeper within, it's all

there. The woman, who is another aspect of herself, tries to quiet her, says "Let's go out and have coffee," because she's agitated. This is simply one aspect of conscious mind speaking to another aspect. They are both emerged to the surface; we're not talking about subconscious here, but a fully emerged aspect of self.

We see the frightened aspect that has resistance and the more certain aspect, one of which is already on the bus and has gone off across the country—the friend—and the other who is saying "Come, let's have coffee. Settle down." In those aspects there is a positive statement of taking control of one's life, of not dialoging with fear, not being caught in that fear. So, there is the clear statement, yes, there is fear for this next step in my life. Yes, I do have the resources, much to my surprise. And yes, a part of me is already going, it's already committed and on the bus. And part of me is very wise and calming.

Not wanting to leave the car: again we must look to see if the universal symbols fit. The car in this case seems more to symbolize the present vehicle, which may mean not the body but the present life situation. Perhaps the bus is an emerging, larger kind of different life situation. It may have nothing to do with travel so much as movement in this town, from one area of work to another, from one way of processing the world to another. Letting go of some of the bitterness and fear, moving into a more openhearted, open-minded space.

The black sun and the light of it seems to re-echo the same sentiment. There are light rays coming out, there's a space of darkness but it's opening into light. And then there is a polar bear in the middle of it. That juxtaposition puzzles me and I don't want to offer any ready answer for it. Everything in the dream need not be solved, it's not a jigsaw puzzle where every piece must be laid in place. So I can't tell you why the polar bear emerges from the black disk in the sky, but I think that we're talking about the interrelationship between the shadow in the self and the light in the self. And the dreamer is seeing within that light some of the strong positivity in herself in the guise of that polar bear.

I would need to ask the dreamer what qualities does the polar bear symbolize to you, so what I say here may not be accurate to the dreamer herself, I'm simply giving you my own interpretation if it were my dream. To me a polar bear symbolizes strength, steadfastness and courage. So those are some of the habits. The woman is wearing polar bear suit, she's clothing herself in it. It is those strengths of the polar bear which are substituted for the black orb in the sky, which overcome the shadow and bring light again.

My effort here is not so much to fully interpret the dream to the dreamer as to give all of you a better sense of how to interpret a dream. This dream with its many, and at first glance somewhat confusing symbols was a wonderful one to work with because it helps you to see that there can be sense drawn out of it. Remember, you must not be rigid. It will be very helpful to develop your own set of symbols. I've seen this particular dreamer use vehicles in ways that are unconventional to the universal symbols before. It is her own set of symbols. So, build up a list. Don't be rigid in interpretation, even with that list. Trust your intuition. Are there questions?

Barbara: (*Paraphrasing the question.*) Suppose you are involved in a painful issue with your two children, one of whom is male and one is female. When you dream about

them are you really dreaming at a symbolic level or are you dreaming about the children?

Aaron: I am Aaron. These dreams exist on many, many levels. On one level you are involved with the issue with your children. You're trying to resolve that tension. But, there are many different things that you could dream about in relation to your children. Why this particular dream? To answer that we must take it to the symbolic level. We don't have a full dream here, and I don't want to take the time to do a full dream, but if it were a woman dreamer and she were engaged in a heated debate, not raging and screaming but with tension, with male and female adult children, as adult children they are aspects of her mature self, of conscious and subconscious mind. She as the dreamer is an aspect of conscious mind. She is caught up, at some level, with tension between these aspects of conscious and subconscious mind. It might be that the male in the dream was a teenager, not an adult, then it would be an emerging level of subconscious mind. Perhaps it was being judged harshly by the conscious mind. Maybe the daughter in the dream was angry at the son. One aspect of conscious mind is angry at an emerging, younger aspect of the subconscious mind.

Look at the different levels of it. Your dreams are giving you clues not just to the surface tensions of your life, but to the deeper issues of your life. They are truly doors into your deepest subconscious thoughts. They can help you to clarify issues. They can help you to know when there's fear that hasn't been attended to, and when there is a sense of strength, as there was in the polar bear dream. They may show that you are coping with the fear. It can be very reassuring. That is all.

Barbara: (*Reading a question from CM.*) Is there any truth in this world? Can we say that true and not-true co-exist in this world at the same time? Therefore, truth is just like the flowing water in the river. It does exist, but is changing, disappearing. So, can we say that truth can be relative like a drop of water in this river. And, truth can be absolute like the entire river which is filled by every drop of water. Do you agree, truth, God, spirit are just like this?

Barbara: In Vietnam, after the end of the war, a number of younger Vietnamese Buddhist monks and, also non-Buddhists, came together trying to formulate a set of life principles. There are many rules for living, for example, the Buddhist precepts and the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments. They wanted to find something that was less specifically grounded in any one religion, that was more universal. They came up with what they called, in Vietnamese, the Tiep Hien Precepts, or Principles of the Order of Interbeing. There are fourteen of them; I find them very beautiful.

I want to read numbers one and two. "Do not be idolatrist about or bound to any doctrine, theory or ideology. All systems are guiding means, not absolute truth. Know that the knowledge you presently possess will change and is not changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn to practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not only in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times."

One person who was instrumental in writing these is Thich Nhat Hanh, who is a Vietnamese Zen master, peacemaker, and poet. Tiep Hien Order of Interbeing is now a worldwide, largely Buddhist but really non-secular order. Groups of people meet and

recite these precepts with one another about once a month and ask themselves to consider them in their lives. We use them as part of mindfulness training in our meditation class. I have extra copies of them if anyone else would like to have one. Aaron had suggested I read that; now he's going to talk.

Aaron: I am Aaron. What we have been given here is not so much a question as a very clear statement. I will offer my response to it.

The only absolute truth that I know is love. I once said the only truths I know are God and love, but when we get into the word God we get into each of your concepts of what God is. In a book of the Bible, John 3 I believe, is the quotation "God is love." So if I say "The only truth I know is love," God is part of that.

Fear, as I have said earlier this evening, is a distortion of love. All of your heavy emotions are distortions of love. Love is the river that flows endlessly. Part of the river cycle is its time spent in the sea. Part of the cycle is its time spent as clouds, and also its time spent as rain. So it's an endless cycle. Some of the water in that river is absolutely pure and some has become polluted. Water is made up of the chemical composition two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen. Even the polluted water still is that H₂O, but it also contains pollutants. Within any river are the pollutants and the clear, pure water. The paper contains wrinkles, but within that paper is the pure, unwrinkled sheet.

Each of you understands the truth of love in your own way. Each of you is embarked on a journey, ultimately, to manifest that truth as purely as you can, to let go of your own filters that have distorted truth. As you purify your own energy and move away from this delusion of a separate self and back into the natural radiance of pure mind, or into manifestation of your angelness, you move back into the source from which you came. The Christian calls it God, the Buddhist calls it emptiness, the absolute, or pure mind. You may prefer "the Unborn, Undying, Unchanging, Uncreated" of the Buddhist Udana Scripture. Whatever you call it, you move back into pure expression of that energy which is the manifestation of love.

When you feel that your truth is better than another being's truth and try to convince them to give up their truth and embrace yours, even if you try to force them to embrace your truth under the guise of religion, or a great teacher, you still do violence to that other being. There is no true religion on this earth whose founding teacher advocated violence. There may be those who call themselves religions and advocate violence, or those who have misunderstood their founding teachers, but no spiritual master who founded any major living religion advocated violence as part of his/her teachings.

By its very nature religion is a way of reaching the truth, a way of expressing the Christ or Buddha consciousness, the godhead within yourself. It doesn't matter how you label it. You're expressing that radiant, pure mind, rigpa. That can only be a reflection of love, which is the truth of the universe. Each of you has areas where you get stuck. As open-minded and unprejudiced as you may be to a certain point, each of you will hear something within another's belief system to which you say "No." Now, your personal "no" is fine. You don't have to embrace another's truth. But, are you hearing their truth and allowing them to hold their own truth and express their own perfection in their own way? Or are you demanding of them that they express it in your way. This becomes a distortion of love. Within this distortion there is fear. Within fear there is

anger, jealousy and greed. They are all distortions of love. Love is all there is, the bare substance of the river when all impurities are removed.

Since we have not really been asked a question here I have not really provided an answer, only my thoughts on a very beautiful statement. I wonder if there are other thoughts that some of the rest of you would like to share. It is a statement that invites participation. That is all.

(Discussion not transcribed.)

Barbara: *(Reading question.)* Is the astral body the same or different than the light body?

Aaron: I am Aaron. Different. Not only different but we are speaking of bodies that reside in different, non-intersecting planes from one another. In other words, we can not diagram them in order to show the relation of the astral body to the light body because they are on completely different planes of being. The astral body is that aspect of self that exists on the astral plane. There is a chain of different planes, the physical plane, the astral, the causal, the etheric. The light body cuts through them all. I can best describe this with an example of many overlays of transparent paper. We have an etheric body, a causal plane body, an astral plane body, a physical plane body; four overlays. Line drawings of the body on each overlay, lying on top of one another, each gets a bit denser. The light body is a flashlight that shines through them all. I will speak further at another time in definition of these bodies. There is a drawing we did several years ago. Rather than ask Barbara to redo the drawing we will give her time to find it in the files and Xerox some copies of it. It will be of help as we talk about this. That is all.

Barbara: *(Reading question.)* Can you speak of grace as it relates to karma?

Aaron: I am Aaron. The word karma means action. Every thought, every word, has accompanying karma. Some of it is what we call adhering, some what we call non-adhering. Some of it is what we think of as wholesome karma, some unwholesome. I use these last terms with some caution because I do not want to create value judgments through my language. What we think of as wholesome karma is simply that which creates situations that lead to greater happiness, to alleviation of suffering. What we think of as unwholesome karma are those acts, words and thoughts which lead into a deepening of suffering. They are not "good" or "bad" in common use of those labels.

Suppose you are outside picking tomatoes and beside you is somebody at whom you are angry. You have a tomato in your hand and you say "Okay, I'm gonna let her have it" and you throw the tomato at her. She becomes infuriated, comes over with her hoe and starts hitting you. That's instant karma. Your action prompted a reaction. You planted the seed for that reaction with your act. What if when noticing your anger at this fellow worker, you see deeply into the roots of that anger—into your own fear and her fear? What if your reflection leads to the arising of deep compassion for both of you, so you are moved to open your thermos and offer her some cool ice tea? What if she accepts, and you sit for awhile and talk and become friends? That is also instant karma, based on the results of your acts.

You have lived hundreds, thousands of lifetimes, and through each of those lifetimes there has been an accumulation of unresolved karma. One must always be

responsible for one's acts and choices. There will be karmic repercussions from each act, word and thought. And yet obviously you can not go back and touch each bit of karma in every lifetime with the work that will be needed to resolve it.

There are many ways of releasing old karma. Forgiveness comes to mind as, perhaps, the most direct and powerful. Suppose throughout a dozen different lifetimes you either were stabbed to death, or stabbed another being to death, because of your quick temper. You can clarify all of that karma in this lifetime if you begin to look at the same quick temper in your present self, a tendency which has persisted. In this lifetime you know that despite that quick temper you would never kill another nor would you provoke another to that extent. You begin to find compassion for yourself for the fear that leads to this temper and begin to work very skillfully with it, learning to release the anger, learning awareness of the arising anger before it builds up to that explosive state, learning to transform the angry energy in skillful ways.

If you then find forgiveness—not even needing to know all the cases where you have killed or been killed—you will be free of that tendency and much of its karma. You simply offer a genuine, openhearted forgiveness to yourself for your angry impulses that have harmed others. You ask forgiveness from those others and you offer the same forgiveness you ask for to those who have harmed you. That can clarify most of the karma. If in your mind you give blanket forgiveness except to Joe Smith, who you feel “I really can't stand him, he really ticks me off,” well, there's still a bit of unbalanced karma there between you and Joe Smith. If there's still misunderstanding, the karma around that misunderstanding is not clarified.

Please note that even after there is forgiveness, compassion, and no accumulation of new karma in a specific area, you must still be responsible for the harmful acts of the past. You need not be killed to balance that responsibility. To teach others not to kill also balances that karma.

There are two steps then, doing the present work in which you acknowledge complete responsibility and transform unwholesome old mind tendencies, and finding and offering forgiveness of the places where those tendencies created harm.

There are other ways to work with karma. One is working directly with the light body and what I call scar tissue on the light body. This practice includes the above, but takes the clarification a step further. I will not go into the details of that here now. I simply want you to know that there are a number of ways to work consciously with karma.

There is a way related to Light practice, which involves a different kind of purification from that of forgiveness practice. When we use the word grace we think of it as coming from either a great master such as Jesus, grace of God directly, grace of a guru or spiritual teacher. You can not go to such a being, whether it be the spirit aspect of the Christ, or to the living or no longer living guru, and just say “Free me from my karma” without changing from within. In this or a past life, first you must do sincere, deep inner work, really giving the effort to work with the shadow within yourself, learning to live your life with more love and skill. And you learn to surrender “self,” allow yourself to rest in the energy of that teacher, or of God, and through prayer and other kinds of purification practice opening your energy to that very high energy. Then, through means that are beyond explanation by their very nature, you open yourself to the possibility of what we call Grace.

It is not that that Grace is offered here, and not there, randomly. Grace is offered! **It is your own work that opens the door for that Grace to come in.** This is an important area to clarify. There's nobody up there saying, "He's worthy, she's unworthy," or making an arbitrary decision "I'll give grace to the first three that come along." This receptivity to grace is part of your own natural, pure mind and perfect radiance. When you do the work to express that, you open the door to receive the grace that's always been offered. You are the one who opens the door.

We're out of time here. Perhaps next week if it interests you, we can talk more about Grace. The whole concept is a very interesting one. I thank you all for your attention and energy. It is very wonderful to sit in this room with so many of you so openheartedly seeking your own truth and seeking to manifest your truth so purely. I find great joy in your sharing of your energy.

All of you have such strong energy tonight I would like to ask if we can lower the lights and just sit for two or three minutes in a circle, hands together, and allow you to experience the joy of this energy and to pass it on to wherever there is need of it.

Wednesday, November 3, 1993

Aaron's talk

I am Aaron. Good evening and my love to you. I will talk a bit as we begin, but I want to take you into the experience of my words and not just let it settle on a cerebral level. We have been speaking a lot of relative versus ultimate reality. In the past we've spoken of this angel in an earthsuit—just different phraseology for the same thing. The earthsuit is your relative reality. The angel is the ultimate reality of who you are.

We're going to speak a bit of history tonight. There have been programs on television about ancestry and roots. What are your roots? Not in this lifetime and not of the ancestors of the cultural, religious, geographical being you happen to be. Who are you? What are your deepest roots?

Because I would not introduce any kind of mass hypnosis—that would be a terrible infringement on your free will—I cannot lead you into this experience. I can only help you lead yourselves and ask you to use your own imagination, visualization and whatever other techniques you may have at your disposal to move with me to as deep an experience as is possible. Let go of perfection. Relax into my words. It will do.

Breathe deeply. Last week we worked with the aperture within the breath—that space between the inhalation and the exhalation. I asked you to rest there, to find that space of perfect light and absolutely pure mind in that brief rest between the inhalation and exhalation. Will you try that now. Breathe in ... breathe out ... breathe in ... pause ... breath out ... in ... pause ... out. Do it at your own pace, but bring awareness to that pause. (*Some time of silence.*) In that pause you are absolutely present in this moment. Pure awareness. As I speak, then, allow this to be a tool that can help bring you back to that pure awareness when you stray.

You have heard me say that you are sparks of God, that you are angels, that you are clear perfect light. I want you to use your imagination here. I will ask you to visualize as brilliant a light as you can. Feel it enter in the crown chakra and move through the body. If there is any hesitation to fully entering that light, note it gently. No force. Move as much into the light as you can. No force.

An optional step here, for those to whom it would be useful: visualize some dearly beloved teacher or guru ... living or no longer living ... Jesus ... the Buddha ... or any of your choice ... for some of you it may help to personalize that light in this way. If you choose to use such a figure, feel the barriers dissolve between yourself and that being. Feel that being as a channel for this perfect light; feel the intensity of that being's light and energy, and allow yourself to merge into it, all separation dissolved.

The important thing is that I wish you to rest as fully as you can in that light and, while resting there, to feel how your own energy feels when it's clear, when there is no constriction of what I have called the light body.

Let us begin with several deep, cleansing breaths. Visualize that Light. See it as you see the sunbeams coming out behind the clouds ... (*Pauses between.*) ... the world's most brilliant sunbeam reaching out to enfold you ... like a cloak, gently wrapping you ...

comforting you ... the light so deeply full of love ... full of gentleness ... feel all holding dissolve in the loving intensity of this light ... all separation fade ... resistance fade ...

As much as you are able, feel that light entering you through the crown chakra ... like the sun melting an ice cube ... dissolving all the holding ... moving through the third-eye and throat chakra to the heart center ... and then that inner warmth spreading through the body ...

It may help to open your hands palm up in your lap, a gesture of opening and letting go ... not getting rid of fear, but allowing fear to dissolve in the perfection of this divine love ... not getting rid of separation but allowing that delusion also to dissolve ... softness of the physical body ... soft belly ... soft shoulders ... allow the jaw to hang just a wee bit slack ... dissolving the tension of the face ...

(Long pause.)

This is your natural state. In this way the conscious human can reach to who you really are. Undefended. Connected. Loving and loved. This is the angel who you are. This was the level of awareness of that first spark of God that moved into the illusion of separation from God.

And then what happened? Somewhere within the first moments of that brilliant light's awareness, it looked around and saw itself as separate. What occasioned that first sense of separation? It's not a useful question to ask. We can simply say that there had to be a sense of separation and the why doesn't really matter. For each of you, the catalyst will have been a bit different, but the illusion of separation was necessary. If you never moved into that illusion, if you stayed in this complete openness—no veil of forgetting of your divine nature—then the Earth catalysts could not teach you. You would know it constantly as illusion. It may sound paradoxical but, how can you learn equanimity with emotion when there is no emotion? Why bother to move into incarnation in the first place, if you are not going to set your feet down firmly in this relative reality and accept the learning of the catalysts that are offered. To do that you first agree to accept the illusion.

So there was that first response to catalyst. Feeling yourself as open as you are now, the first catalyst was like a roll of thunder, BOOM! (*Aaron shouts and Barbara's hands clap.*) Could you feel your energy contract then? And then awareness, it's okay, I'm safe, and a relaxing back into the openness again? But suddenly there was a sense of threat, a sense of separation, something "out there" that could hurt me "in here." And the first defendedness arose.

I have described this using a metaphor of a raindrop on a vast plain. One drop of rain falls. It must go somewhere. It sinks into the earth or, if the earth is just slightly slanted, it runs downhill. Then another drop falls in that very shallow furrow and digs out a few more grains of sand. A third and a fifth and a tenth drop, and there's a small rivulet of water.

Whatever was the first catalyst to separation, it carved that first tiny furrow, and then each new catalyst was interpreted in the same way with a rising sense of need to defend. Each of you created your own kind of defense, your own ways of constricting your energy. Eventually, there were enough raindrops that there was a stream and a river. Finally, the Grand Canyon. It was not formed by a cataclysmic explosion. The

Grand Canyon within each of you, of your separation from God and from your self, your separation into “me” and the illusion of separate self, was not necessarily formed by monstrous traumatic episodes in this and past lives, but just by a million raindrops which followed the path of least resistance, moved into the habits that were solidifying into character and way of being with the world.

I want you to experience this within your own energy field. So, I want you to return to that openness again. Call up again that beloved teacher or guru. Move back into the light. Feel your energy open. Use the tool of the breath ... in ... pause, and rest in it ... out ... *(Some times of silence between words.)*

Now I would ask you to think of something painful that came into your lives this week ... something against which you felt a need to defend ... perhaps a sense of jealousy ... of a friend getting a job ... not taking it from you, but perhaps you’ve been wanting a better job ... and there was a feeling of pain or inadequacy ... perhaps the pain was from a sense of rejection by somebody ... or trying to do something and not being able to ... feeling inadequate ... feeling attacked by another ... the arising of anger ... Allow this situation to come into your memory ... as fully as you can ... now this next step is going to take careful watching ... with senses that you don’t usually use ... can you feel the sense of fear ... the constriction of energy ... and how it cuts off the light ... allow yourself to feel it ... unshielded ...

I want you to look at this situation and ask yourself, in this moment was I really unsafe? Was I really threatened? Was I really unworthy or inadequate? ... Can you see the way mind interpreted it because of all the past data and the ways it had been interpreted? The carving of the Grand Canyon—can you see it?

Now, very consciously, come back to that clear light. We are not going to get rid of the shadow—this is important. To get rid of is just to bring more self in and create deeper separation. Rather, you are going to come back to who you really are, to allow the constriction of fear to dissolve. To come back to openness again.

Breathing ... drawing in light ...

This is not done because there is preference to the good feelings of connection and openness, and aversion to pain and separation. This is done because you make the decision to live in truth, and the truth is that you are light and that fear is an illusion. The constriction created by fear is part of the illusion.

No holding ... relaxing back into the light ... back into who you are ...

There is a light body which is perfect. With each arising of fear, separation, constriction, the light body gets what I call a scar tissue. You might think of the image of a brilliant light, perhaps a window through which brilliant light shines and plant like ivy climbing up over the window. It obscures the light, shades the light. But that ivy is also a manifestation of light. If you take the light away, the ivy dies.

The scar tissue on the light body truly is illusion. And yet, on the relative plane, it has solidity and is, in its own way, also a manifestation of light. It relates to old karma, which is another kind of scar tissue on the light body. The physical incarnation is a replica of the light body. If you were a painter or sculptor and here was this perfect model on the platform, you cannot create the model, you can only create a replica of the model.

Last week we crumpled a piece of paper here, and then smoothed it out, and I asked you each to see the perfect smooth sheet of paper within the crumpled paper. So, on the platform you have the perfect physical model: young, elastic, radiant skin and glossy hair, vibrant energy. Now let's change that model. Throw some tomatoes at it. Wrinkle the skin a bit. Rough it up. Here's some scar tissue. Chapped and dried places. Is the perfect body still there?

Come back to your sculpture. You create what you see. If you see the scar tissue and the garbage that's been thrown, the wrinkles, that's what you create into your sculpture. The incarnation uses the template of the light body, but all those places where there is old scar tissue—the constrictions of old mind tendencies, the scarring of karma—they all are carried into the new incarnation. Then you can work to clear all that and finally come back to that perfect light body, come back to knowing that in that crumpled piece of paper is the smooth perfect white sheet, come back to knowing that within this physical incarnation is the divine perfection of who you really are.

There are many techniques for releasing the illusory scar tissue, releasing old karma, releasing old energy patterns. You can work with the chakra energy in the body directly, with the energy meridians of the body. You can work with mind and emotions and meditation. They're all tools. Part of what we are doing here this semester, this year really, is to further explore these tools, to help you find ways to rest in your perfection, to release the constriction and defendedness and come back to truth, the truth of your perfection and divinity, the truth of that first spark that is nothing other than the divine.

This week I would like you to practice what we've done here tonight. When you are quiet in meditation, allow yourself to enter into that space of undefendedness and connection. When you are moving through the myriad catalysts of your life and something booms or roars and causes constriction, when you feel that tension, stop if you can. Notice the tension. Ask yourself, "In this moment am I really threatened? Or unworthy? Or inadequate? Am I at risk of not getting what I need?" Whatever the appropriate question seems to be. When the answer is "No," see if you can consciously allow that constriction to dissolve. This is a bulldozer full of dirt pushed back into the Grand Canyon. Fill it up again. You don't need it. Come back to who you are and, from that place of connection, see how your response to the catalyst differs. Can you learn to live your life more from this space of divinity within you, rather than from the illusion of fear and the constriction of old mind?

Do it again and again and again and again. Eventually you will learn there never was a Grand canyon, that this was part of the illusion. Next week I would very much welcome hearing your experiences. Tonight, after the break, if there are any of you who tried last week's homework, which was to insert this breathing practice—in ... pause ... out—into tense situations, I'd very much like to hear your experiences with that and hope you will share them with the group. I thank you for your attention. That is all.

Questions and Answers

Barbara: Last week, Aaron is saying, he gave us an exercise of breathing—breathing in, resting in that pause and breathing out—and asked us to experiment with that during times of tension during the week to see what happened if you did a few breaths

that way before coming back to the tension. Did anybody do that? Anything anyone wants to share?

J: The time I remember the most was last Thursday. I had to take an exam, but before the exam I had a two hour lecture, and I found my heart racing, waiting to get through the lecture so I could take the test. I kept doing the breathing and stopping and re-centering myself, and it really helped to calm me down and bring me back to myself.

C: May I ask J a question? (Sure.) Did you find that moment between inhalation and exhalation anything special?

J: The thing that helps me with that moment is, Aaron has described that moment before as the now. That moment is now, the moment we are in, and that helps to bring me back to myself. We always talk about how the most important moment is now, not the moment we came out of, not the moment we're going into, because we're not in either of those places.

C: He said that tonight, too, but I don't understand why the inhalation and exhalation isn't as much the now as the pause.

J: Why isn't the breathing—the exhalation or inhalation—just as much ... *(Can't hear rest of question because of microphone movement.)*

Aaron: I am Aaron. I understand your question. Technically, the inhalation and exhalation are just as much in the now if you have done extensive mindfulness training. But, for most of you, the exhalation especially pulls you into the future, reaching for the next inhalation, expectant; the inhalation links you to the past. There is a timeless quality to the aperture between. That is why it is given the name "aperture," an opening into NOW.

With the inhale and exhale, if there was anger, for example, as you inhale, that anger is in this moment, but the catalyst for the anger—unless it's continuing; let's assume that it's not continuing, but that it happened some moments ago—the catalyst for the anger is in the past. As you draw your breath in, you frequently draw that past catalyst in as well. When you exhale, your mind is already looking to the future, to the next inhalation. That space between the breath has neither past nor future in it. It's very hard to come out of the now of that space. You really have to work at it. Whereas, in the inhalation and exhalation, it takes a bit of work to stay with the now of the inhale and exhale. Does that sufficiently answer your question? (Yes.)

Barbara: Anything else people would like to share about the breathing exercise?

C: I was very angry at my husband for something that had come up during the weekend, and I sat on Monday morning with that anger, doing that breath. And the image of love and light and the God within us, the whole idea of that place being a safe, loving, peaceful place was very helpful. I could be very in touch with anger on both the inhalation and exhalation and still rest in the peacefulness of that moment. I think, with practice, it becomes a very powerful tool.

Barbara: I was using it a lot this weekend, too. I was in Florida with my parents. My father was moved into a nursing home last week and is very sick. When I say very sick, he has Parkinson's. He's not sick in a life-threatening way. He has reached a point where he can't move himself around enough. He needs such constant care that my

mother couldn't take care of him anymore. He was feeling very uncomfortable being in this new environment instead of his home and realizing, "This is my home for the rest of my life," which is a very scary thing to look at. Taken from the comfort of his apartment and his big recliner chair in front of the TV, suddenly he's in a small room with another man. He's got a hospitable bed and a wheel chair. It's a nice nursing home, but it's very scary. And my mother was tense, scared and agitated. I was breathing. It really got me lovingly through the weekend.

Anything else anybody wants to share? No? Okay.

Question: I don't dream. I just fall asleep and wake up.

Barbara: You probably dream but don't remember the dreams or even the act of dreaming. The first step to remembering your dreams is the intention to remember them. Take a note pad with you. Put it beside your bed with a little flashlight or nightlight, and a pen. And say to yourself, when you get in bed, if I have a dream, I'm going to wake up enough to write it down. Or just begin with the intention to wake up and note "dreaming," then go back to sleep.

CM: A long time ago I had a dream and my mom criticized me in English in the dream. She was Chinese. Before she died, I was in China. Does this mean something? In the dream I asked her, "How come you learned English?"

Barbara: As a female, your mother represents your subconscious mind. As mother she's also authority, perhaps, and nurturer. Subconscious is criticizing conscious. English is a new area of growth. I see this as the subconscious asking the conscious to "step it up" a little, to work and learn. This is my interpretation; you'll have to decide if it fits.

J: I also want to say something. I never used to remember my dreams, like you. I would fall asleep and wake up. And maybe once a year I would remember a dream. Working with the intention to remember my dreams really helped. I remember a lot of dreams now. It's not that you're not dreaming, it's that you're not remembering the dreams.

Barbara: We've been talking about lucid dreaming which is, when you're dreaming, knowing that you're dreaming, and being able to work with the content of the dream to change the dream. If somebody is chasing you in the dream, you know, "They can't really hurt me in the dream," and to turn around and say, "No" to them. Or if there's fire and you're being chased by the forest fire, you're aware enough that this is a dream that you can say, "I can't get hurt by fire in a dream. I'm just going to turn around and walk right back into it." We start to learn to work with the dream state in our dreams, which empowers us to work with the dream state in our lives, with the part of us that thinks that this illusion we call life is real, and to not get so caught up in it.

Aaron wants just one dream—a not-too-elaborate dream. He basically wants to teach us how to analyze our dreams by going through one briefly each week and helping us learn through his way of analyzing them.

J: I dreamed I was an ice skater. I was a woman. I had on a beautiful white dress with flowers, very flowing. And I was an incredible skater. I was passionate and skilled and the crowd loved my skating. I got very high scores. When I came off the ice, the girls' hockey team and the coach were waiting for me. The coach was dressed in black with

long black hair and she was saying, "That's enough. No more ice skating. Now you have to play hockey again." And I said, "No, I don't want to play hockey anymore. I want to ice skate. I like it better. I'm good at it." And we had an argument where I say, "You can say whatever you want, but I am going to be an ice skater. I am not going to play hockey anymore." And then I leave and my friends are waiting for me and the crowd is cheering.

Barbara: What does hockey mean to you?

J: Well, it's a violent sport. Very aggressive. Very fast-paced.

C: Also, it's not usually a sport women play a lot!

J: The image of the coach and the girls' hockey team was funny, but they were a very menacing presence in my dream.

Aaron: I am Aaron. We've given you printouts of the frequent symbols of these dreams and made the statement that the way you use the symbols may vary. The printout is only a guide to help you get started. I want to you create your own sheets of personal symbols. Ice skating usually would have do to with balance. I suspect that that's only part of it in this dream. For J, I think, ice skating, figure skating, has a sense of being open, moving to the inner and outer music. Passionate, as he said. Fully alive and in this moment. One cannot ice skate while one's mind is drifting off. One must be fully in the moment. Free. Creative.

He was dressed in white. White and black are not always consistent symbols, but I have seen in J's dreams before that white is very much a color of light for him and black a color of heaviness and closure. If you are keeping a dream journal, it will tell you how you've used symbols in the past.

These were all women. He is male in this incarnation. So they're aspects of his subconscious mind. Three different aspects: the figure skater, the coach, and the reluctant hockey player. A coach is a figure of authority. Figures of authority in his life have been both respected and not so respected: beings such as parents or teachers who were the authority figure without really earning J's respect. The coach then represents that kind of controlling but not necessarily wise authority which the space of love and creativity and openheartedness balanced perfectly on its feet, dancing, dressed in white is finally learning to say no to. It says no to that outer authority which would hem it in. And also to the subconscious inner authority that mimics that voice of outer authority, that voice of judgment, "You should do this, you must do that." No. And the reluctant hockey player aspect knows, I've had enough aggression in my life, it's time to dance.

It's a very powerful dream. It will help J to understand the transitions that his subconscious mind is making, the choices that have not yet come into consciousness, but which will be manifesting themselves in his upcoming conscious life. Thus, he won't be surprised when he turns down the "good job" while the voice of authority says, "You should do that," but there's a lot of tension and disharmony in doing that ... and when he moves back into the place of love and balance and openness and more fully pours himself into the dance of his life. That is all.

Barbara: I'm paraphrasing Aaron. He wants to know if you see how it works ... that the subconscious mind makes certain choices. If we're not in touch with our subconscious, we're not aware that we're making those choices, and then they surprise us. In this case, the judgment—a voice that says, "You should take that job"—if we start to get stuck in it and think, "Well, gee, maybe I'm deluding myself, maybe I should listen to that authority voice, instead of going deeper and trusting, "No, at some level this is a real decision that I've made and I can trust my heart, I can trust my decision."

CM: Prayer, "self-talk"—those things help us sometimes to know about ourselves. They give us some feeling of honesty, sincerity and respect for ourselves. But those two things are different. Self-talk is clinical way to help your self-image. And prayer is the religious way. And yet, they serve almost the same thing. Is there something similar going here? What is the link between these two forms of self-change? Does prayer work because it includes a clinical form of self-help techniques? I do not believe in God, but I have found self-talk helpful at times and it seems similar to the way prayer is taught in religion. So, are these the same or different? And how do they work? One is clinical; one is religious. Or are they just different forms of the same thing?

Aaron: I am Aaron. This is a wonderful question to dig ourselves into. First I want to discuss prayer and what you call "self-talking," or affirmation. The "self" is involved in both, to some degree. There are many aspects of the self. I'm not talking about that place of pure awareness and emptiness of the experience of self here, but the place where consciousness and self-awareness set in. There may be no delusion of that self as separate from anything else, but there's still a sense of an observer, of somebody who's participating in this. I'd call that the clearest level of consciousness: a place of connection and, simultaneously, of self-awareness. It doesn't buy into the illusion, but it is willing to work with the illusion.

This is the space within you from which the most sincere prayer emerges. It's the place where all delusion is cut, where dishonesty is put aside. It's the place where you are willing to remove the armor of defendedness and truly stand naked, vulnerable, and open-hearted, to experience the depth of your joy and pain, and not to own either of them, but to allow your own joy to take you into the joy of the whole universe, and your own pain to be acknowledged as part of the pain of the universe.

Prayer that emerges at that level is never selfish. It admits its total ignorance. It doesn't say, "Let this happen," rather it is a form of communication with all that is. If you envision a God as part of all that is, then it's a form of communication with God. But prayer does not necessitate an image of God as controller, creator, puppet-master. When I use the term God, I'm not envisioning that puppet-master with a long white beard and a stick. Rather, what I envision when I use this term is the eternal, that which continues to exist through its infinity and inter-being with all that is.

In the Buddhist Udana scripture, the Buddha says, "Oh monks, there is an Unborn, Undying, Unchanging, Uncreated." To me that is a perfect description of God. We can't say God is this or that, or it limits it. We can only say what it's not: not born or dying, not changing or created. It is that within all of us which is unborn, undying, unchanging, uncreated. That spark of divinity within all of us.

When I am within that place within myself and I address that space in the rest of the universe, that is prayer. I do not beseech; there is nothing to ask for. I merely open my heart and communicate my love and my pain.

When we move into a dialogue with fear in our lives, it enhances separation. We start to act as if we need to control our lives. With connection, we pray, "May all beings find freedom from suffering; may we all find the healing that we need," and trust the myriad forms in which that healing will appear. With fear we start to say, "May this particular pain be healed." You can't know that's what you need to have happen. True prayer offers deep trust.

Of course, when there's painful catalyst, the first impulse is to wish it away. For example, when Barbara first lost her hearing, her fear said, "Please, I need my hearing back." I'm not saying that would have been a wrong thing to happen to her, but it would have prevented the tremendous amount of learning that has come her way through experiencing the world from a place of silence. You cannot know what's going to happen in your lives.

When you move into that dialogue with fear, the level of consciousness shifts and the person expressing this prayer changes. There's more constriction of light, as we talked about earlier tonight, more need to control. You start to think that you are somebody and that that somebody has got to fix yourself, fix the world. The further you go with this, the more controlling you need to be.

When you use the phrase "self-talking," I see a wide variety of possibilities there, from something very akin to prayer, but from more of a place of self, to that which needs to convince itself it's okay. You spoke of this being taught to enhance self-esteem. On the relative plane, yes, it's useful to keep telling yourself, "I'm okay." But, eventually, you've got to get into that, "Why do I have to keep telling myself I'm okay? What doesn't feel okay?"

Affirmation can be very tricky because, if there is much fear, it can come from a place of denial of one's dialogue with fear. It can be a way of separating oneself from one's fear. Affirmation used skillfully can be a reminder of who you really are.

When I hear the phrase "self-talking" then, to me the usefulness of that depends on how caught up you are with ownership of your fear. How defended are you? Is the self very clear or has it moved back to the self that needs to control, that needs to make a statement "I'm okay" and keep saying it over and over, more and more forcefully each time it doesn't feel okay? You are never going to learn that you're okay by bargaining with the universe to be okay, by grasping at "okayness." You're only going to learn you're okay by slicing through "okayness" and "not-okayness" and finding out that neither one is real. You've always been okay. There's no such thing as "not-okayness"; it's just a distortion of "okayness." There's no duality between them.

What I would suggest is when you quiet down and begin to use this process, you ask yourself "Who is talking here? Is this a voice of fear? Can I let myself just fall into that fear, release my defendedness? And instead of having to talk from a place of barrier and separation, can I move more deeply into the fullness of my open heart and my inter-being with all that is?" As you do that, the "self" in "self-talking" dissolves, the

connected self takes over and you move, increasingly, into the form of prayer. Does that sufficiently answer your question or would you like me to speak further? That is all.

CM: I'm having trouble understanding the part about separation and connection. I got lost there. I understand that if you separate yourself from the real world you're going to have a lot of fear and if you connect with the world you are not afraid.

C: What do you mean by the real world? What Aaron calls the illusion of life?

CM: Oh, that's a good question. I don't know how to say it. If you are not realistic, you think things are surrounding you; you are separate.

C: You mean reality is this physical world? Or do you mean what Aaron ... ?

CM: Not just physical—material world. It's kind of like reality. If cut yourself in reality, you're going to feel fear. Am I right? I don't know.

C: He describes the real world as reality, meaning the material world.

CM: Not only material. Reality is reality; it's truth.

J2: But isn't reality different than just reality?

CM: Reality is something. ... The imagination is not reality.

J: Aaron talks about relative reality as opposed to ultimate reality and that relative reality is illusion.

CM: I'm trying to understand which dimension the real world is. If you're always thinking for yourself, self, self, self, me, me, me ... you always have a lot of fear. Why? Because you separate yourself from dynamic whole world. Real world.

J: I think maybe what you mean is you're separating yourself from the connection of the spirituality ... or you're getting too caught up in the illusion of the world, the materialism of the world.

D: When Aaron says that this world, relative reality, is an illusion, does he mean that the illusion is the illusion that this physical world is all that there is to us? What does he mean when he says this world is an illusion?

Aaron: I am Aaron. You've heard this before. You are actors in a play. You learn through your acting role and you learn because you're also part of the audience. If the play is presented with love and truth and you sit in the audience and hear and watch it, you're going to learn something. If the actor appears on the stage and says to the audience, "Now, this is just a play. Don't pay much attention to it. It's not real," and his stage presentation is careless, sloppy, he's not going to put his heart and soul into that role and the audience is not going to pay attention.

If the actor comes onto the stage and becomes so obsessed with his role, so totally identified with it that he forgets it's a play, he may turn his back to the audience. He may lose track of the fact that when he walks off-stage, he leaves the role behind him. Just so, in this incarnative experience, if you put ultimate reality aside completely, you can get so caught in the illusion that this is all there is—this body, this mind, these emotions, these physical senses, this consciousness—that you start to attend to all that

as if there was nothing else. And, of course, if that's all there is, there's going to be a lot more fear. It makes you grasp at trying to fix things the way you want them to be.

I'm not suggesting that there's anything wrong with skillfully fixing that in your life which creates suffering. If you see that your neighbor's house is about to burn down, you don't shrug and say, "It's all illusion." You get a hose and you put the fire out. That's the actor skillfully reading his lines. You're not trying to write the lines, but you follow the lead of those lines. If there's a fire, you put it out. If there's somebody crying or in pain, you comfort them. If there's hunger, you eat. If you're tired, you sleep. But you do it with a sense of awareness: this isn't all there is.

There are those who attempt to do social service of one sort or another in their lives, to attend to the myriad sufferings of humanity. Those who do that work most skillfully do it with a lack of attachment to results. They are not afraid of other's pain. If somebody is in pain and there's nothing they can do to alleviate that pain, they don't run around screaming, "Oh, do something! Do something!" They sit quietly and hold that being's hand, just allowing their pure beingness to be a balm to that being, help with the space they can make around the being. They're able to do that because they don't mistake relative reality for ultimate reality.

Somebody who rests only in ultimate reality may have deep wisdom that cuts through the illusions of the relative world, but they also have desire to escape the pain of that relative world. They use their wisdom as an escape. They say, "Oh, don't pay attention to the pain. It's not real." It may not be real but, if I'm the one who's just burned my hand and the flesh is blistered, it certainly hurts me.

You must know that at one level it's illusion, and at the same time it must be attended as skillfully and as lovingly as is possible, with as much compassion as can be mustered. This is that balance of relative and ultimate. Eventually, you come to see that relative reality is an illusion. It rests within the ultimate.

I spoke of the perfect pure light body, but somehow it's had tomatoes thrown at it. It's become wrinkled like the piece of paper. The manifestations on the physical plane are those of the illusion of imperfection. The perfection always exists. The pure Buddha or Christ mind always exists. You do not mistake the wrinkled reflection for the reality, and yet you know that the wrinkled reflection is nothing but a manifestation of that reality. Fear is a manifestation of love; a distortion perhaps, but you do not have to get rid of fear to find love, but to cut through fear and know it for what it is so that you're no longer entrapped by it.

You don't have to get rid of relative reality to experience ultimate reality. By your loving attendance to it, without any attachment or aversion, not trying to make anything happen, to fix anything—just being present, aware "This pain is perhaps relative pain, but right now it hurts; it touches the deepest place in my heart with compassion"—it stops being your pain or my pain. It becomes the pain of all beings everywhere in the Earth. And thereby, it becomes the vehicle by which I can return to pure mind, while knowing I still need to deal with the human pain.

There is much more that could be said here. We're running short of time. I wonder if this answers the question for you? If you have specific questions, will you think about them this week, write them down and bring them in with you, perhaps offering them here

Wednesday, November 3, 1993

before the start of the session so that if there are enough specific questions, we can start with this focus as my opening talk.

Your instrument for keeping track of linear time says it's time to stop. My loving gratitude to you all for the love and commitment that you give to this inner work. I have enjoyed this evening with you. That is all.

Wednesday, November 10, 1993

Barbara: Aaron is asking me to do something rather different tonight. He's asking me to start by telling a story, by talking about something that I've been working with. I assume he's going to connect it into what he's going to say. Most of you know we are working on two fronts here, tearing the old storage shed down, building a new shed, actually a garage-size building, and emptying the garage so that we can convert it into a meeting space, meditation hall, office, whatever. Also, people are working on the paperwork to become a non-profit organization. I'm just sitting back watching this all flowing.

It seems wonderful that there is all this energy and enthusiasm, but I'm also feeling some fear. It's a lot of money. I did buy a shed this week, but as I was buying it there was fear: it's a lot of money, I don't have that much money. Also, what if neighbors complain? Right now we're just a group of people getting together; we're not doing anything illegal, in so far as zoning; we're just a bunch of people sitting here together. But if we become a non-profit organization, then what if neighbors complain? There was fear coming up about both areas.

Part of me was asking "Is all of this necessary? Is there any of my ego in it," that I want a bigger or nicer space, or I want to have this become a non-profit organization for some ego reason? There's got to be some ego in it, but as far as I could tell there isn't a lot. It just seems to be the way to keep this moving, spreading and available to more and more people. But I kept gravitating back and forth.

So, Michele had made many phone calls and had tracked down what seemed to be cheapest, right-size shed for the money at a lumber yard. On Monday I went there and went through the list of all the parts and what it was going to cost. Hal and I had been prepared to spend a certain amount of money, which was all that we had to spend and was really emptying the bank account. The shed was more than that. So, I came home and Hal and I talked about it. We just kind of sat with it for a while and decided, "Have faith; just let go, trust, do it. The extra money that we need will turn up from somewhere." Tuesday I went back to the lumber yard, signed on the dotted line and bought the shed (gulp), putting myself in debt. I came home and there was a wonderful note and check in the mailbox which will cover the balance above the line on the shed plus beginning a fund for the meditation hall. Trust!!!

Then this afternoon Cassie and I took a walk and talked about the fears about the neighbors complaining and about the non-profit organization issues. Just sitting here tonight I was remembering a poem from Karen's grandmother:

I am the place that God shines through
For God and I are one, not two
I need not fret, nor will, nor plan
He wants me where and as I am
If I'll just be relaxed and free
She'll carry out her plan through me.

Thanks to Karen's grandmother. So I was thinking about that just now as I was sitting.

There's a quote that comes from Eastern teaching: "Trust God and tie your camel." We've got to work with God, not just trust God and barge ahead. As I was thinking about that I realized that, yes, trust God, and it would also be very useful to go next door to my neighbors and tell them that we have a group that meets here every week, that they've probably noticed cars parked here. That we are many different religions and we get together to talk about spiritual things. That's what we're doing here. Just to tell them what we're doing and why there are all those cars.

As I was sitting here before everybody came I felt such a sense of relief. I've just been going about this wrong, with so much fear, trying to manipulate and control and make it all work out, instead of just giving love to it, trusting, and knowing I'm not in control; just trust and let it go. But work with it, lovingly, by speaking with love to the places where there may be friction. Aaron says thanks. Okay, on to Aaron.

Aaron's talk

I am Aaron. My greetings and love to you all. I'm going to work my way back to what Barbara has just shared, rather than starting with it. I want to start in a very different place, with some basics that we got into two weeks ago. I was talking then about the light body. We got into many questions about this bewildering array of bodies that you seem to have. The first thing I want to do, then, is to try to explain them so that we are all working with the same vocabulary. The suggestion was given two weeks ago that Barbara find the old transcripts from several years ago dealing with this material. These were transcribed at a time before the current computer was purchased, which is able to index transcripts and find any specific term. Although she poured through a thousand pages of transcripts, she was not able to turn it up. So, we will start fresh.

We start with light. You may call it God, the absolute, emptiness, All That Is or the Source; it doesn't matter what you call it. There is a line in John 2 of the Bible that says, simply, "God is love." So we might call it love. There is a Buddhist scripture, called the Udana Scripture, in which the Buddha is speaking to a group of monks. He says: "Oh, monks, there is an Unborn, Undying, Unchanging, Uncreated. If it were not so, there would be no reason for our work." This stating what it is not, seems a good way to speak of it, since we cannot say what it is. It is that which is totally beyond your human concepts of beginning and end. We can not even call it infinite because infinite is balanced with an opposite of non-infinite. Even to call it infinite bounds it in some way. This of which I speak completely transcends any duality or concept.

The core of this essence is energy, which manifests as light. When I say that you are a spark of God, what I am essentially saying is that you are a small bit of that infinite and perfect Light. I can not tell you what prompted your move, but at some point the individual energy that each of you are broke off from that Light, or at least had the illusion of separating. Truly, you can not be separate from it. But the illusion is necessary. I once said that you are like children camped in your parent's backyard. The child must go through the sense of independence and even of danger in order to mature. It can not mature if the parent always keeps it within its arms, inside its house. It must step out on its own. The parent is always watching from the window, always there, ready to help. But the child must feel independent. It has wonderful adventures. It thinks that the squirrel that it heard crackling the leaves while it slept in its tent was a

big, black bear. It finds the courage to deal with that bear! Wonderful adventures! And this is how it grows.

Each of you came to that time of self-awareness when you become aware of this energy within the perceived self and thought it different, or separate, from what, for simplicity's sake, I am simply going to call God. We all know what I mean here. You've all heard me talk of the four bodies, the physical, emotional, mental and spirit. That was the beginning of what we call the active mental body, that first thought of separation.

The spirit body is almost synonymous with the soul. The mental plus the spirit body is what we call the higher self. When you move into incarnation there is, of course, a physical body. The emotional body begins to form before the incarnation but it is not fully shaped until you reach the catalysts of the incarnation. It is resting dormant.

That which I have called the light body is not synonymous with the soul, or spirit body. The spirit, mental, emotional and physical bodies are on a different plane than the light body, which cuts through all these other four. Let's look at these four as transparent overlays. Spirit on top, then mental, emotional and physical on the bottom. The light body is a brilliant light that burns through them all, which means that the essence of that light body is within each part of you.

We could do with some fancy lighting equipment here to make this all clear. Barbara and I discussed it and decided to keep it simple. What I had suggested to Barbara was a brilliant flashlight and four transparent overlays. When the flashlight beam is perfect and clear the light that shines through each of those bodies is perfect and clear. If you were to take a piece of uncolored cellophane and hold it over that flashlight, the light coming through would still be perfect and clear on each level. The light body is the totality of light source (The Eternal) and cellophane (projection of the Eternal).

Several weeks ago we took a piece of paper and wrinkled it. I asked you to tell me if you could still see the pure, flat, white paper in that wrinkled sheet. You agreed, it's still there. Here we take the cellophane, we wrinkle it, and then we hold it between the flashlight and these four bodies. The light body is still "perfect"; the unwrinkled sheet of cellophane is within the wrinkled sheet. But the wrinkles are also visible. The places of wrinkle are going to show up on each transparency. We may call them the scar tissue on the light body. These are largely the products of old karma.

May we have a sheet of plain paper please. Let's do this again. Look at the perfect, smooth piece of paper. (*Barbara crumples the paper and then flattens it out again.*) It's wrinkled now. Can you see the perfect white sheet? The wrinkles are real on one level and illusion on another level. They are real, but the perfect smooth piece of paper is there none the less. It has simply become distorted. This is very hard to phrase in words. The light body, in ultimate reality terms, is never scarred or distorted, but there are wrinkles. The perfect light body is still there. What reflects through to each of these four bodies contains the wrinkles.

This fact has different implications on different levels. The scar tissue of the light body is karmically induced. It creates the contractions that offer the potential for places of disease, weakness or distortion in the physical body. Those wrinkles also offer the contractions where you get stuck in the emotional body. Likewise for the mental body.

I'm not going to talk about the spirit body here. We'll save it for a different talk. But, yes, the spirit body can become distorted. We will hold that for another talk.

Part of the problem in understanding all of this terminology is that we are using the word body, as if it were equivalent everywhere. I've stayed with these terms that are conventional, but it would be far easier to understand if we gave them different names.

There is one other set of "bodies" we need to bring in. These are what are called the etheric, causal, astral and physical. Again, they don't correlate. They are on planes that do not intersect, so we can not talk about the emotional and mental bodies and the astral and etheric bodies in the same breath. Let me simply explain these four.

The physical is obvious. It is the combination of bodies of the physical plane. The astral body is essentially the combined spiritual, mental and emotional bodies. These are the bodies that one finds on the astral plane. The physical body is a manifestation of the astral body, in a sense. It is the solidification of all the elements in the astral body.

Beyond what we call the astral plane, which is the plane where you rest between incarnations, is what is called the causal plane. The relationship between the astral and the causal planes is that of grade school and university. On the causal plane one is still subject to the laws of cause and effect, but one has largely moved past reactivity. However, for one still on the causal plane there is still an idea of a self, even if one is free of identification with that self. As long as there is an emotional body there remains the possibility of that identification with self. Lowest sixth density is the end of the causal plane.

Higher sixth density beings have moved beyond the causal plane. They retain a mental body in order to be able to communicate with one another, such as I who retain that body to teach. But there is no identification with it as "This is me" nor is there danger of such identification since the emotional body which creates identification has dissolved. So that is what is meant by "beyond the causal plane." At that point one enters the etheric plane. The ether is simply the heaven. It is a plane beyond causality.

I am offering you far more specific, technical, wording tonight than is usual. You do not have to know all of these terms. But many of you have been asking me, "Aaron, how does all of this go together? How does all of this interrelate?" If what I am saying makes sense to you, that's fine. If not, just dismiss it, you don't need most of it. We will come back to that portion that you do need.

Tonight and in past weeks I have been describing the light body and its correlation with the physical, emotional and mental bodies. We need to understand this because we are beginning to move in a new direction. For some years we have focused on the wrinkles in the physical, emotional and mental bodies, and how to work skillfully with these. Now we begin, increasingly, to practice working not only with the distortions in relative reality but with the parallel, illusory wrinkles in the light body. Seeing the physical plane distortion and the template for that distortion in the light body, knowing that distortion was never *owned* by you but simply arose because of conditions present for its arising, seeing furthermore that the notion of the distortion was an illusion because you can know/experience the perfection of the light body, then we simply let go of the distortion.

This is a capsule description of the work we will be pursuing, probably until summer. I have lost some of you tonight. I apologize for that. I think that as I speak further tonight and on other nights, it will come together.

Let me give you one more illustration and then let's put this aside and go on from terminology to meaning. Feeling yourselves sitting just as you are, feel your physical body. Just above this physical body ("above" is a linear space term. By "above," what I mean more precisely is in a dimension just aside from your physical body) is what I call the higher self. This is the pure mental and spirit body. It is the very highest aspect of you that is still a self—very wise, very loving—but still participating in the duality of self and other. Even if it knows that duality to be illusion, it still uses it as a reference point.

Now I ask you to visualize or feel this higher self presence and your own physical body presence. As I see you, all of that (higher self and physical incarnation) rests within a cylinder of light. Again using your linear space term, just "above" that higher self is what I would call the light body. The cylinder of light does not flow from the light body but through the light body. The light body is the perfect carrier of light, like a magnifying glass which takes the greater light and focuses it into a brilliant point. That point becomes the cylinder that wraps around you like a cloak. This is your aura. As some items absorb light and then give off that light as their own glow, thus the light body does give off its own glow, but the light that it glows with is not only its own, but comes from whatever we wish to call that which for simplicity sake I will call God.

So, from that divine light, the light flows into each of your light bodies and through it. Being focused by the light body, it surrounds the higher self and the physical incarnations. There are a great many different physical incarnations, one after another after another. ("After" here is another term of your incarnative experience; on my plane time is non-linear and "after" has no meaning.) No physical incarnation can contain all of the energy of the light body. The soul itself can not contain all of the energy of the light body. The incarnation can not contain all of the energy of the soul. So it keeps getting stepped down.

I give an image which is more poetic and concerned with overall pictures than precision of detail. Picture an infinite sea, no shores, infinite. There is also an infinite Spring which is that which we have called God, and which feeds this sea. They are really one and the same—the source and the sea. Rivers flow from the source into the sea. Each river is an individual being's light body. The light body focuses and brings that light to a very precise, very strong, energetic pinpoint of light. Let us call that the spirit body. As the river gathers itself tight, then spreads out, then gathers again, the soul moves into one incarnation after another, but it is never separate from the source or the sea. There is only the illusion of separate parts.

A different image: I am attempting to give each of you some tool for understanding these interrelationships. The water from the Source pours into a hot water tank; we'll call that the light body. Each lifetime is a cup out of that tank. Each cup of water is no different in its purity and perfection than the Source itself. But because it has come some distance from the Source it has picked up impurities. The potential for perfect purity is there. The water itself is always pure but scattered through it are impurities picked up along the way. How do we strain out the impurities? And how do we come to understand that we are, and always have been, that perfectly pure water? This last is

vitality important; it allows us to stop blaming our misunderstandings on the impurities we have picked up along the way and understand our true nature You are not striving to be perfect, you already are perfect. But because you do not yet know that perfection you act out your misunderstandings and distortions. Your delusion wrinkles the paper!

Much of our work in the past has been a matter of learning to work skillfully with those distortions, to understand our responsibility for our choices. You have learned to meditate, to move into deeper awareness of who and what you are. You are learning non-reactivity to the catalysts in your life, learning to create a more spacious and open heart that can deal more lovingly with the world. This is work in progress for all of you. None of you have finished that portion of the work yet, and some of you have barely begun it.

Simultaneously we can begin to work with the light body itself, coming to see how the contractions that we feel are reflections of the scar tissue in the light body. We may then work on two fronts. First, finding non-reactivity to those contractions in the physical being, you stop practicing the wrinkles. Second, seeing through the distortion that we thought was "self" and releasing it, you will learn to see the perfect piece of paper instead of the wrinkles. When you know the piece of paper is perfect you will no longer identify with the wrinkles.

I've been talking for a long time. If you will forgive me for extending your patience a bit further, there's one more thing I want to talk about. Each of you who comes to incarnation has experienced the deep pain of the illusion of separation from the eternal. You each experienced it in your own unique way. What I would like to ask you to do is to sit here and meditate for some moments and, as much as is possible, invite in love and light, and allow yourself to sit enfolded by that love. Just do that now for some time. If visualization is possible for you, allow yourself to see and feel brilliant light, as if you sit in the most brilliant sunbeam. (*Silence.*)

Now image that it's (*Hands clapping.*) cut off. A dark, black cloud cutting you out of that light. Cold, harshness, darkness. Without getting overly intellectual or analytical about it, see if you can feel contractions in all the bodies. You may or may not be able to discern the contractions at the physical, emotional, mental or spirit level. They may all come together, that's okay. Feel whatever is to be felt with that contraction. There may be sadness, or even real pain. You may experience it as a real wound, a place in some or all of the bodies that is suddenly tender and vulnerable. Think of it as a wound in the heart.

There is a pain in the heart. Can you feel how you will bend over and curl yourself up a bit to protect that wound? If this is difficult for you to visualize, think of it simply as a sore on your arm. A place that was burned and is very tender. You're walking in the woods and bushes brush past it. It hurts and you withdraw the arm. As you walk down the path and see more underbrush, instead of moving your arms and allowing them to swing at your sides, you hold that arm back, defending against perceived future pain.

In the same way you each learn, in your own unique patterns, to protect that tender heart, that tender place of pain. Some of you move into patterns of greed and clinging, afraid that your needs won't be met. Some you move into patterns of jealousy perhaps, or of anger and distrust. You lose track of the original wound. You become so

contracted, trying to protect yourself; each time you contract it further distorts the light body and the energy body. (By the term energy body I simply mean that part of you through which energy travels. The energy body is an interconnector of all the bodies, in a sense. We need not go into it in detail.) Can you see how you've lost track of the original pain? It has multiplied itself a thousand and a million times. But each distortion was simply an attempt to protect. That's all fear is. It is the distortion that says "I am separate and I need to protect myself." It is built on, literally, thousands of deluded incidents where you moved into that same pattern. Each time it happens the paper is creased a bit more and it becomes harder and harder to see that perfect, white sheet, and to live as if that perfect, white sheet were the reality.

We can not always trace it back to the experience of the original separation. Some of you may be able to see it in your meditation and others may not. What we can come to know is that it was all delusion. That first pain was based on delusion because you never were separate, you were just out camping in the backyard. The more you let go the more you come to know who you really are, and to rest in the truth, beauty and wonder that you are. To rest in pure mind. To rest in love.

Feel this tension of defendedness within you, the way I've asked you to imagine catalyst coming towards you and your curling up and holding your arms over your chest to protect yourself. What I would like you to do is look at what comes towards you by whom you felt threatened. Take a deep breath and tell yourself "I am not threatened. It has all been part of the delusion." I want you to open your arms and hold your head erect. Actually move into this posture. Chest out, head erect, exposed, open. If there is any fear just breathe it out. Allow yourself to touch and be touched by the universe. Breathe in light. If there is fear release it with the out breath. Not getting rid of it, just seeing you don't need it. Let it go.

I want you to try this through the coming week. Each time there is fear, even if your body does not actually move into that curled and defended posture, feel the contraction that leads to desire to defend. Come back and rest in this cylinder of light. Literally open your arms as a reminder, raise your head. Breathe in that light and feel the need to defend dissolve. Please work with it and share with me next week. I would like to hear your experiences.

I thank you for your attention. I will end here for your break and then be glad to hear your questions. I also hope that you will share some of your own experiences. That is all.

Discussion

Barbara: This is Barbara. Aaron says that two weeks ago he did a guided meditation in which he asked people to breathe in, pause and find that space of "now," breathe out. Then to take that into your daily life and, at a place where there was tension, see what happens if you breathe that way. He is wondering if anybody did that and if you have anything you would like to share.

F: I've been finding that I've been doing that a lot, it's really coming quite naturally to me, and it's just been probably the best tool that I've had for centering and just awareness building; mindfulness of whatever. It's been a very helpful tool.

M: I've found it quite natural. I think I've tried this before.

K: I've found that it's making me very aware of my thoughts because when I'm really agitated and I do that pause I can feel the thoughts come rushing in to cover that empty space. It's helped me to notice them more clearly than any other practice. Sometimes it's hard for me to do anything other than just watch them come crashing in. They're almost like waves, pounding on the shore. Other times it is great. It just depends on how agitated my mind is at the time.

M: Feels like sitting in the light. Same spacious place, quiet.

Barbara: I've been working with it a lot these past two weeks, too, and I'm finding that it really clarifies for me when I'm slipping into old mind and into distortion, and brings me back to this moment. In this moment is there really whatever the distortion was? Is there really anything to be afraid of or is this fear old mind? It clarifies that question so much for me.

D: I have noticed that when I am angry, and when I remember to do it, I can see a little easier how much I want the anger as protection.

Barbara: This is something that Aaron was talking to me about this week. He says he talked tonight a little bit about the way we take that "original wound" and magnify it so that what we are defending against, ultimately, isn't that wound at all but all the places where we have defended in the past. So we do want that anger because it is the way we have always handled our pain. But there never was any unmanageable pain that we needed to handle. We did it that way the first time and so we've kept doing it. Questions?

D: Aaron spoke tonight using the terms "energy" and "light" quite often. When I was in college I studied physics, where energy and light have specific meanings. Does Aaron mean those conventional meanings when he uses the terms "energy" and "light"?

Aaron: I am Aaron. Essentially I mean the same thing, but the energy and light of which I speak are the archetypes from which physics draws its terminology of energy and light. There is light with a capital "L" and light with a small "l," energy with a capital "E" and with a small "e." Does that answer your question?

D: It raises several questions. One is, what is energy with a capital "E"?

Aaron: I can only offer this in metaphor. Think of the sun, think of a very powerful laser light and think of a flashlight. Now, think of the light of a billion suns, not just one. Infinite! That infinite number of suns represents energy with a capital "E" manifesting itself as light. The light of one sun is the light body. The light body is your own bit of the infinite energy, also manifesting as light. The light moves through it. Each one gets stepped down. You come to the flashlight or candle, the individual. Does that answer your question sufficiently?

M: I was wondering about the unwrinkled light body. How can there be an unwrinkled light body which perceives itself as separate from the source? Does it perceive itself as separate if it's unwrinkled?

Aaron: I am Aaron. The light body does not perceive itself. The light body is nothing but a projection of the "sun." It expresses through those aspects of self which have self awareness, but the light body has no self awareness. Do you understand?

M: At the level at which the light body is perceived as unwrinkled, is there a self to perceive it?

Aaron: I am Aaron. There is simply pure awareness which is aware of its perfection and which willingly enters into the illusion of self to provide itself with the tools for self awareness and perception. Does that answer your question?

M: When the awareness moves into this sense of self, at that point must the light body become wrinkled? In other words, is our identity ... does it come from the wrinkles or does it precede the wrinkles?

Aaron: I am Aaron. Awareness picks up the tool of self much the way you pick up a screwdriver when you wish to set a screw. You have no problem knowing that you are not the screwdriver. You don't carry the screwdriver with you after the screw is tight; it has done its work. Pure awareness picks up the illusion of self, knowing it to be illusion, in order to do its work on this plane of relative reality. As long as there is no ownership of that perceived self there is no adhering karma; there are no wrinkles. The wrinkles arise when the illusion solidifies so that awareness forgets and hangs onto the screwdriver, owns it. Then there becomes a self that is doing, and then we move into adhering karma. The attachments and aversions within that illusion are what create the wrinkles. But remember they are both real wrinkles and not real. The paper is perfect.

I would ask you think about a scar, this is why I use the image of scar tissue. Imagine a razor cut. It is brought together imperfectly, creating a raised edge of skin, a lip. In order to hold the cut together it is joined so that there is a raised edge. Every time that edge gets rubbed and creates abrasion, more scar tissue forms over the top. At some level beneath the scar tissue the skin is perfectly healed together. I'm tempted to say that at some level the cut never happened; I'll toss that out to those of you who want to play with it. But on the relative reality plane the cut did happen. You could perhaps visualize cutting off the scar tissue, simply holding the torn ends together perfectly, so that they healed without scar. This scar tissue is the manifestation of delusion that there is something awry which needs to be mended.

I am struggling to find words within Barbara's mostly English vocabulary to express this. The English language has not concerned itself with this type of question to the extent that it has formed adequate vocabulary. You are limited in your ability to move into the concepts because there are no words for it. Some of you may remember Doran from Israel, who worked with us several years ago. He told us that in the Hebrew language there had been no word for the emotion of frustration until five or six years earlier. You could be angry, you could be bewildered, you could be challenged, but you couldn't be frustrated. There was simply no word to express it. It's very interesting to understand what happens when you broaden your vocabulary and find new words that do express a concept. I am not going to try and teach Sanskrit, which is perhaps the best language for explaining all of this. Rather, we will try to work around it with English equivalents.

So, pure awareness loses its mindfulness for a moment, gets stuck in the illusion of having been somebody doing something. Within that space of separation and the duality of self and other, fear arises that it may be hurt or its needs may not be met. The energy contracts with that perceived threat to the perceived self. When the energy contracts two things happen. Adhering karma is created by the response to the

catalyst, whatever that response may be, and there is a correlating scar tissue, or wrinkle, that forms in the light body.

This "scar" is simply the reflection of the contraction. That contraction has moved through the energy bodies. It comes to rest lying on the light body, rather than being an intrinsic part of it. Let us say that it is a shadow of a wrinkle on the light body rather than a substantial wrinkle. Nevertheless, the next time the light moves through, that shadow of a wrinkle shines through the spirit, mental, emotional and physical bodies and becomes a place of blocked energy within the whole system. Through many different tools one must release the shadow of the wrinkle.

I said several weeks ago that one can roller skate over rough concrete, but one must constantly be struggling for balance. At some point it becomes skillful to smooth the concrete; then the skating is much easier. So, what we have been talking about in the past is learning to skate on rough concrete. What we are presently talking about is smoothing the concrete. You can not always count on smooth concrete; you must learn to skate on rough concrete. You must also learn that it's skillful to smooth the concrete. One hopes not to be attached to smoothing the concrete, to know that you can skate on rough concrete, but where it's smooth-able to smooth it. Does that answer your question? That is all.

M: So the sense of self can arise before the wrinkles, but the solidified ...

Barbara: I'm paraphrasing Aaron. The sense of self arises immediately upon seeming separation from God, but it's not solidified at that point. One knows this is an illusion. The difference here is the wrinkle doesn't form until you start to believe in that self as "reality."

M: The solidified sense of self is the wrinkles, but the wrinkles do not create identity, that comes before. But the identity is seen as illusion as well until the solidified self comes.

Barbara: Aaron says almost. He says come back to the metaphor of picking up the screwdriver, using it when you need it, then putting it down. I'm paraphrasing Aaron here. The mental body, the higher self, chooses to work within the illusion because it needs to move into relative reality if it's going to learn. But sometimes it gets lost in the illusion and that's when the wrinkles happen.

M: The unwrinkled self exists only in ultimate reality then?

Aaron: I am Aaron. No, the unwrinkled self exists everywhere! It is right here in this room within you in this moment. You are all perfect, you are all angels. It is this that you must come to know. (*Tape turned.*)

Aaron: I am Aaron. Put one foot down, that foot is in relative reality. Feel the rug or floor under your foot. Perhaps there are some sharp places, or it's cold. Put the other foot down, that foot is in ultimate reality. Follow your two legs up, they come to one heart.

There is no duality between relative and ultimate reality. Relative reality is a part of ultimate reality, one aspect of it. This is just the point. If you were not already perfect then you would be having to attain something, to fix something. Yes, of course there is unskillful behavior grown out of your fear, grown out of the ownership of this illusory self. But there is nothing to attain, there is nowhere to go. You are angels, you have always been angels. You have the Christ or Buddha mind already here. You

are perfect. But you are not yet awake to that perfection. Do you understand? That is all.

Barbara: Aaron is saying he is not addressing just you in that, M, but others who are confused. Other questions?

CM: The individual body vs. the body of society. Our society is a combination of bodies of each individual. The society is losing the ability to love. I feel it is getting lonelier and lonelier. This society has more and more problems. If so, can we explain this by what we have learned today, that the mental and spirit bodies of each individual are separated and losing the ability of love because they are separated from the "lower body" or "lower self." Is there a pulling apart, or separation, occurring between the higher self and the emotional and physical bodies that is responsible for our losing our ability to love? I'm from China, which is a family oriented society. Each individual does not have that much privacy, does not need that much privacy. The space between is not as big, physically. People are, maybe, too crowded or whatever, they don't claim this as my privacy, this as my space, there is no such thing. People feel weird if you say too much about this being my, my, my space. That society does not have this lonely feeling for each individual. Does the lower self need more and more privacy, but the higher self actually doesn't need this and so the lower self is pulling away?

Aaron: I am Aaron. I am always intrigued by and enjoy your questions, my friend. There is some separation of the bodies in the way that you are asking. Many people have cleared the upper chakras but not the lower. They live their lives "a small distance from their bodies," as an author once put it. There is different learning within each body. The emotional and physical are more joined, as are mental and spirit. The emotional and physical bodies desire privacy at times, often out of fear and the seeking of escape and protection, and the mental and spirit bodies dwell more in connection. But these pulls are not responsible for the cultural differences which seek privacy and create loneliness. Rather, beings have incarnated into one or another culture to give rise to the catalysts that will best serve to stimulate the areas of needed learning. This "lower self" is the small ego self. There will be choice to incarnate into a society where that loneliness serves as incentive for learning to move the weight back to the higher self ...

(End of tape. Time was out and Aaron did not speak at length to the question, just answered briefly.)

Wednesday, November 17, 1993

Aaron's talk

I am Aaron. Good evening and my love to my all. Barbara's voice is a bit hoarse tonight. If some of you further back cannot hear, please make it known and someone will tap Barbara to ask her to speak louder. I am suggesting to her that she keep it quiet and not strain her voice as she has a retreat and will be teaching all weekend.

I want to start here with a meditation to help guide you into an experience, and then we'll talk about what it's about.

If you will forgive me for backtracking, I'm going to spend just a minute or two explaining the term, karma. Most of you are familiar with this word. The word karma literally means "action." Every act, every word, every thought, plants a seed. If somebody addresses you and you respond lovingly, you plant a seed for kindness. If you are addressed in the same way and snap back with an angry retort, you plant a seed for anger, for pain, separation.

Each seed you plant will bear fruit in this lifetime or in future lifetimes. You do not need to believe in reincarnation to understand karma. You can see it unfolding in every moment. The most essential rule of karma is that you are responsible for your choices.

I have been speaking of the light body. Last week we got quite technical. I'm not going to repeat any of that. All you need to know is that there is that aspect of you that is the perfect, let's call it template for this physical, emotional and mental body. I will ask for that same piece of paper we've been using week after week. Or a new sheet from the pad.

An unwrinkled sheet of paper, smooth. This happens to be lined paper, but let's visualize it as pure white, perfect. (*Crumpled paper.*) We're covering this house with crumpled paper! Can you see the perfect sheet of paper still exists within the wrinkled sheet? Your physical, emotional and mental manifestations of the light body appear crumpled. Sometimes—in ways that I will not go into again, we have talked about it before and it is in the transcripts—those wrinkles, let's call them the wrinkles of karma, seem to reflect back and attach to the light body itself. So we have the ultimate reality that the light body is perfect and relative reality that it also appears to have wrinkles.

We have been looking at the ways those wrinkles affect your body's energy, leading to illness sometimes, leading to heavy emotions and the desire to discharge those emotions, which catch you in a vicious circle. The wrinkle irons itself in, so to speak, as you practice it.

I want to come back now to a meditation that we've done before because this is what I want you to be practicing—not ironing the wrinkles in, but smoothing them out. So we will do variations on this meditation frequently in the coming months, hoping to give you a very real tool that you can work with in your life when you feel your energy, physically or emotionally, contracting.

Bring your attention to the breath, simply noting its coming and going ... I call you "angels in earthsuits." Most of you are very much in these earthsuits and you have lost

touch with your angelness. The contractions of your energy pull you back into the human illusion.

When I say illusion, it is an illusion in which you must live. You can't deny the illusion, but you also need to know that it is not fearful reality.

Breathing in ... breathing out ... I want you to bring to mind some moment of anger, embarrassment, jealousy or want, resentment ... something that has happened today if possible ... See if you can remember that feeling clearly enough to actually feel the way your energy contracted ... in a sense, to re-experience that feeling; not just remembering, but allowing yourself to re-enter the experience ...

Can you feel the tightness? ... We've sometimes used the metaphor of your energy as a river flowing ... and this blockage as a log-jam in the river ... Within that metaphor, we have spoken of the ways to work skillfully with the logs. Now I want to come back to the current itself. What do you do when you feel that contractedness? And you do feel it over and over throughout the day. Most of you are not aware of how often such contractions arise and are not fully in touch with how it feels to be connected, open and uncontracted.

Feeling this contraction in you now ... I want you to move your attention to some historical, mythological, past or present being who very much represents truth for you. It may be a being like Jesus or Mary, the Buddha, Mohammed, Moses, Gandhi, Mother Theresa ... some guru or teacher. It may simply be God. It is important that you see this being as very pure. There does not have to be a deep connection or love. It may be a teacher who is not of your own religion, but someone whom you do identify as being very pure, truly that angel. That's fine.

This next step must not be offered to get rid of the discomfort of the contraction, but is a compassionate opening to the pain of that contraction and a willingness to release it. There is a very big and vital difference.

Seeing the pain of that contraction within you ... hold yourself tenderly as if you were your own child ... Reach your energy out to that teacher or master of your choosing ... and ask for this being's help ...

Turning toward that being ... use whatever senses are available to you to feel, see, sense it's presence and the power and clarity of its energy ...

Breathe in that energy ... Breathe it out ... breathing yourself out into that other ...

Breathe in ... and out ...

Allow any sense of separation to dissolve ...

You may be able to visualize or even imagine or feel a brilliant light emanating from that being. Some of you are asking, must it be a being, an individual? Not at all. Use God in whatever form you understand God to be ... whatever works for you here. Use brilliant Light, or the cosmic OM.

Like the brilliant sun ... coming out from behind storm clouds ... so that the rays may be seen moving toward the Earth ... you stand just in the shadow and see that brilliance ... and make the decision to step into it ...

A light with brilliance beyond any that you can conceive of ... feel it touching the crown of your head and moving into you ... through the third eye and the throat to the heart center ...

You may wish to open your hands palm up in your lap ... feel the same light ... breathing it in ... boundaries dissolving ...

Know that this is not only the divine perfection of God and of those great masters, but that you also contain divinity within you. It is the wrinkled paper in which the perfect paper lies.

Breathe in that light ... Stand in it ... Hold it within you ...

Bring your attention now to that contracted energy ... I want you to see that this is the log jam in the river and not the river itself. The river's energy has always flowed smoothly ...

Each of you has used your resentments, your jealousies, your sense of unworthiness as ways to protect yourself. It has become a habit. When you feel attacked in some way, it's natural to draw yourself around and close up. What I am asking you to do here goes against that instinct of self-protection. It is the only way to come to know the unlimitedness of the self and to begin to break away from that habit which has cemented the illusion of separation.

We are practicing this slowly tonight. Obviously, when there is an external catalyst, you cannot sit down and meditate and invite God or Jesus or the Buddha in. But, if you practice it enough in meditation, when there is that external catalyst and you, with mindfulness, feel the contraction of your energy, you can make the decision, "Not this time. I do not need to stay contracted." There's no judgment here, no getting rid of it, no "This is bad" and "That is good," only a skillful sense, "I do not need this. It's an illusion. I am safe." And then you reopen your heart because you have practiced. It becomes almost instantaneous that when you feel contracted you move your energy into that being's, ask for its help and feel that contractedness release.

It's a process. When you first learned a skill such as swimming, you needed to think, "First I move my arms just so and I kick my feet and which way do I breathe, with which stroke. ... " As you became proficient swimmers—or skiers or tennis players—you stopped thinking about the process and it simply flowed. I want you to work with this process until it begins to flow in just that way. The best place I know to practice it is during your formal meditation time until you become established in the movement of it. And then, of course, you must carry it out into your life.

It doesn't have to be a big deal, simply you're driving your car and somebody cuts you off and you feel anger arise and contraction. Whose anger? Where did it come from? What is it about? Almost an instantaneous thought: "Old mind. It is just this being that I think I am, wanting to be safe, feeling angry at somebody moving into my space. Old habit."

Seeing that—and we've been working with this for a long time and many of you have learned to see that—the body is still reverberating from that anger and it's sending the pattern of wrinkles out. This is the next step: "Do I need to hold onto that anger or can I release it?" This is not a judgment of anger. You've all heard me say so many times, anger is not bad, it's just energy. It is your relationship with your anger that creates your

difficulties. So we are not judging nor getting rid of the anger, but coming to the skillful understanding: There was never anything that needed protection in this moment. It is just old habit.

And then, ask for help, moving into the energy field of that energy; you will find as you practice with it that it really only takes a moment because you become so used to resting in that energy field with the boundaries dissolved that just the thought of that being or of memory of the Divine brings you back to your own divinity and you can become the smooth sheet of paper. The anger has not been gotten rid of, it's just been let go. The contractedness lets go, the heart reopens. There's joy again and connection. You do it a hundred times a day.

Slowly you find that the contractedness doesn't happen as fast, that you stay more open. This does not mean that you don't wisely move yourself out of harm's way, but that there's no sense of needing to defend and the anger that arises with that need, only the skillful stepping out of the way of oncoming traffic, the skillful decision not to walk down the alley.

I'm going to be quiet for a few minutes. What I want you to do is move back into that energy field. Remember again the contractedness of jealousy or anger or fear that arose today and, literally, try this process without my constant words here. I will be quiet for two or three minutes.

(Long pause while we re-enter the process described above.)

I am Aaron. Even if you cannot feel this, I hope that you will continue to work with it. Trust the process. It takes time for the heart to open. It takes time for you to understand some of your resistance to opening. We often choose to rest in the prison we have come to know rather than to choose freedom. Be gentle to yourselves. No force. But practice over and over with it, patiently, and see if you begin to notice the stirrings of the heart opening and the contraction of energy dissolving.

We spoke several weeks ago about karma and grace. One of the questions that was offered to me before this talk asked me to speak more about this in relation to the talk if it were possible and it seems to fit here. I do not wish to repeat anything that was said several weeks ago, but to take it a step further forward.

Nothing can happen within you without grace. This does not mean that you do not have free will. Grace is not something that is dispensed—a bit here, a bit there—with no reason to it. Nor is grace earned. It's not that if you do a thousand prostrations or a thousand recitations of a prayer, you're going to win an award of this much grace. Rather, you invite yourself to move into the grace that is always offered when you aspire to become more responsible, more loving and harmless in your relationship to all that is.

Grace is not something you attain. In a sense, it is the ability to see the light and the decision, the courage, to move into that light—for it does take courage.

Your karma has accumulated through many lifetimes. You are responsible for the choices that you have made, in this or past lives. It is your understanding that you are responsible and the maturity to say, "Yes, I am responsible and I will grow in such ways

that I do not repeat these unskillful patterns," that invites the grace of whatever teachings, guidance, light you require to help you on your way.

Grace is not the gift of the select few, but it is available through the loving heart of Jesus, the deep compassion of the Buddha, through whatever channel you seek and find it. It is the light that will lead you home. But you must have the courage to step into it.

I will be glad to answer any further questions about any of this. I thank you for your attention and the loving energy you are giving to this work. That is all.

Questions and Answers

Q: (*Left over from last week.*) Aaron has said that we are sparks of God, that at one point we looked back at that infinite energy and thought that we were separate. But, if we came from that infinite energy, we must have known we were not separate. Why did we accept the illusion of separation and all the fear and pain that follows? I have suspected that the reason is that to do so is to grow and expand, and that the very nature of the infinite energy is to grow and expand. Is that how Aaron sees it?

Aaron: I am Aaron. I'm going to begin this answer with a question, requesting some feedback from all of you. Have some of you had the experience of being so totally engrossed in something that you really forgot where you were, what you were doing? You may have been watching a sunset or listening to a symphony. Those are examples we sometimes used. But you might have been working in your home or shop building something, or painting, writing a poem. You might have been watching a movie. You might have been making love.

In some way there was a time when that experience of total connection with what you were doing seemed to end and there was suddenly a new sense of self-awareness, as if you had just emerged into separation. I'd like to hear about that from you, especially for you to share it with each other so that you may each start to see where that lies in your experience. That is all.

(Group sharing: not all transcribed.)

C: When I am driving in a car—especially if I am listening to a story, but sometimes even if I'm just driving—I sometimes have the experience of not realizing where I am and it is a kind of trance state. Another kind of mind state is when I'm doing polarity work and I am working out of a particular place in my head. It's not exactly losing track of time, but it's moving into ...

Barbara: Aaron is saying it's not time, but self.

C: It's more a sense of moving myself away and continuing to function. I do therapy with clients who have been abused as children and they are wonderful at completely disassociating. They leave their bodies and separate from the pain. It was a very useful tool during the abuse, but is not always useful in their adult lives. I am confused about those different mental states.

Aaron: I am Aaron. I want to be brief here as I want each of you who wishes so to have a chance to share. We are talking about several different kinds of states. One is a state of connection that you move into that is quite the reverse of fear-founded. It's maybe a

trance state or it may come in through working with another's energy and putting your own energy consciously aside. But there is a sense of letting go of boundaries, fully coming into connection. In the deep trance state, there may be no awareness of that connection until you come out of the state. With your polarity therapy, you have more sense of a consciousness directing it.

This is very different from the leaving of the body of those beings who have been abused. There is no disassociation in what I am speaking of. In that leaving of the body, there is very conscious decision to escape, but one is still very much in one's own awareness, simply that awareness has left the body and gone elsewhere. One is not feeling connected in that state, but very alone. Do you understand? Do you have questions?

C: *(First part of question is not on tape.)* ... mind state of driving a car and not ...

Aaron: I am Aaron. I do not usually offer specific suggestions to people, C, but I would like you to look at why allow yourself to move into that kind of a trance state while driving and whether that is the ideal state to be in in that situation. Why not get where you are going safely and then relax into the trance state? We will talk further about that. It is a personal concern. That is all.

C: I accept Aaron's suggestion as very valid. I believe it's a very common experience with people who drive long distances who find that happening.

Barbara: No sense of how you got from here to there?

C: Right.

Barbara: Do other people experience that? *(Many raise their hands.)*

Aaron: I am Aaron. I do value all of my friends here so I am going to urge you all to deeper mindfulness while you drive. I do want to go back to the original question though. What we are talking about is that state where boundaries dissolve while you are involved in some activity. It's not really a trance state. It's a bit different than C's example of driving the car. That approaches the disassociation of her clients. It's more a state of such deep involvement ... it's not moving away from what you're doing, but entering into it so fully that there ceases to be any separation between the doer and that which is done. Again, I invite your response. That is all.

M: If someone talks to me while I am painting, thinking in very right-brain mode, thinking about shapes of color—I'm not using words at all and I am very involved—it's very painful to try to answer. It's even painful to be spoken to. How come?

C2: Sometimes when I'm writing poetry I get quite lost in the process and I think the poem and I become one.

Barbara: I would guess those are your best poems, too?

C2: Yes, they're probably channeled! Why is it that through karma we are responsible for all the unskillful things we do, but when we create something beautiful, it's "channeled" and we can't take credit for it!

Barbara: It can be channeled from your higher self as well as from external energy, but also you need to take credit because you were able to get yourself out of the way well

enough to allow it to flow through without distorting it, and that's not an easy thing to do.

M: Doesn't our lower self create anything?

Aaron: I am Aaron. Karma. (*Much laughter.*) Actually, that is not all and I'm being facetious. Your lower self, if we can speak of it in those terms, creates the situations which are absolutely essential for your learning. It is constantly giving you that gift of putting you into the situation you most need to be in in order to meet that which you most need to learn. That is all.

Barbara: I am paraphrasing Aaron. He wants to know if you all have a sense of this experience that he's talking about. He says there's nobody in the room who has not at some time, even if briefly, experienced that sense of, both the total involvement in what you're doing and then the sudden awareness of the presence of a self again. And it's less the space of connection that he's talking to in this framework as moving back into awareness of a self, that moment of dawning, "Hey, I'm me." Do you know what he's talking about, that experience? (Yes.) Okay.

Aaron: I am Aaron. We can use this experience as a way of understanding what it was like when you first had self-awareness. You have been writing your poetry or painting or working in the garden or driving your car—no, let us not use driving a car as an example, that is a bit different—working with polarity therapy, doing something where the boundaries of self have completely dissolved. You are resting in pure awareness. Then you put down the pencil or paintbrush, walk out of the movie theater, the client leaves and you get up and suddenly the whole illusion of self comes back.

In that first moment of seeing from a reference point of self again, there is no clarity, "Oh, this is an illusion." It's just a shift in perspective, but the shift is such that you fall into it. It becomes totally convincing. You know that you were in a space of emptiness of self for some time, a space with no boundaries, but that becomes the altered state and this reference point of self becomes the basic state.

Each of you experienced that at some level in this first, let's say spark of God breaking off. There really was no breaking off, any more than there is a solidifying of boundaries when you put down the pencil or paintbrush. You were connected, you always are connected, but that perception is so profound that it becomes the hole you fall into and you can't see anything out beyond the edges of that hole. There never was a self. It's all illusion. There never was separation. But how are you going to learn if you don't experience it?

The questioner here said that it was the Infinite's way of seeking to expand itself. Precisely. That which we call God, that perfect light and love, is constantly seeking to expand itself. Infinite intelligence is seeking to expand itself. Infinite love. You are the points that reach out and extend from that infinite energy constantly expanding it, not simply to expand—this isn't a matter of greed—but the more that your intelligence, wisdom, love, compassion expand, the more light you bring into the universe, the more you light up the dark corners of the universe. Yes, that which we call God is infinite; and yet, darkness is also seemingly infinite.

I say seemingly because in ultimate reality there really never has been darkness. This gets complex. There has not been darkness but, as long as there is the illusion of

darkness, it is very dark indeed. If you become very fearful and angry and your energy very contracted to the point that you are almost paranoid, feeling that others plan to hurt you, you are living in much darkness. There may be no truth to any of that, but from the perspective of the one experiencing it, it's very dark.

There are many beings who are deep enough into negative polarity that the universe seems very dark to them. It takes a tremendous force of light to offer the beacon that they need to light their road so that they may return out of their self-imposed darkness and into the light. Your courageous willingness to expand your own energy, to purify it—yes, I know it's already perfectly pure, but it is just a matter of bringing in light where the illusory darkness lives—your willingness to do that provides that beacon for others. It does bring light where there has seemed to be darkness.

We put ultimate reality aside here. There's no darkness, there has never been darkness; but, in relative terms, there is suffering and it must be attended to. You can choose to stay in that ultimate reality forever, but at some level you understand that that is turning your back on suffering. As long as there is refusal to get your feet dirty in relative reality, there is an escapism and a move to negativity. In other words, that which has chosen not to leave the Source for reason of protecting itself from the illusory pain of relative reality is already choosing self-awareness and negative polarity at one level. It's not really still resting within God, but is simply an ostrich with its head in the sand.

The first moment of self-awareness is not useful to speak of. It really doesn't matter. It cannot be explained in your terms. I'm sorry. But it's very much a "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" question about which we could get into endless meaningless philosophical debate. Simply accept that you have taken that step and that it was like the waking from the symphony or a sunset or a poem or painting or gardening or therapy, where suddenly there seems to be a duality. That's the perspective that you're suddenly looking through.

And then you are given the most wonderful catalyst: What do I do with this illusion of duality and the fear it brings me? Through skillfully finding equanimity with that fear and coming back to rest in ultimate reality, no longer as escape, but as the greatest gift you can give to the world's suffering, you have brought light and expanded that infinite awareness. Does that sufficiently answer the question or would you like me to speak further on it? That is all.

Q: Did we all begin self-awareness at the same time or is there some sort of constant turn-over, so to speak, of us being separated from the light by illusion? Will there be a time when we are all part of the light again as one?

Aaron: I am Aaron. I can best use the example of an ocean filled with many billions of molecules of water. The metaphor is distorted because the ocean is finite. Let us consider this to be an infinite ocean. There are forces on that water. The sun shines down on it and evaporates it. The wind blows it. The water that has evaporated doesn't disappear, it simply changes its form, becomes a cloud. The wind blows it over the land and it finally comes down as rain again, back into water. A human may drink it and it may pass through the human body. A tree may drink it. It may move into the experience of being a part of the sap of the tree. When the tree falls, eventually that water will return to earth again. It flows into the streams and rivers and back to the sea. It never ceases being water, it only changes its form.

You never cease being part of that perfect light, but you change your form. You do not do this all at once. There is a constant turnover of new souls emerging from that infinite sea. There is a constant turnover of old souls that have moved through all the densities, not only the human form, but beyond and returned to the light, now as mature suns in their own right, each brilliant and radiating its own light.

This sea which we are calling God is infinite. I do not imagine it will ever "dry up" in terms of new sparks of it ceasing to emerge to begin the move to maturity. Since there will constantly be new sparks emerging, I do not imagine there will ever come a time when it all rests again in perfect light. But the way you are learning is changing.

We get here into a question of the densities, that you are now third density human. That which is returning to God is seventh and eighth density. But the experiences of the densities is changing and Earth is becoming a fourth density planet where there will be the availability of more light and higher experiences while still allowing you to be incarnate.

There will always be new energy. What I visualize happening, and please understand this is merely my own humble opinion, is that as more of you learn to love, as more of you learn to work skillfully with the impulses that lead to sense of separation and duality and lead you into harm of others, the younger energy will be more wisely guided, will not need to move into some of the more painful situation in order to learn. I think we will find a time in the distant future when there is far more light everywhere in the universe, less suffering, far less negative polarity, and less distinction between the experiences of the different densities.

Some of you wring your hands and feel distraught over the pollution, the violence in the streets, the natural disasters, and the immense suffering on your Earth. I am not denying the reality of any of that, but in the time frame of the entire many hour movie, your life is one frame of that film. When you look at history, you look back a few thousand of the billion frames, or even just a few hundred. You don't really have any concept of the entirety of it.

I do not think I am living in a fantasy or being a blind optimist; simply, from my perspective, you are learning. That doesn't mean that you should go and pat yourselves on the back and say, "Gee, aren't we wonderful!" You have a lot yet to learn, but I don't think it's as hopeless as many of you seem to feel it is. You are all learning.

There will be a time when everything has moved back into the light, but not in the way that the questioner intended it. It does not mean there will be no more new souls emerging, but the universe into which they emerge will be one of far more light and perhaps even of no negativity. Will you still be able to learn? Yes. I have repeatedly said that you do not need the catalyst of pain in order to learn. My conjecture is that the wisdom by that time will have led you to guide that new energy into paying attention as needs to be paid so that it may learn without pain. Perhaps some of you will come back to visit and see how it is in those days. That is all.

Q: Do you have the name Aaron for our benefit? Do beings on your plane have names? Can you tell me my spirit guides' names?

Aaron: I am Aaron. I have the name Aaron and appear to Barbara in the very human form I do because it has been my experience that humans find it hard to relate to a talking and impersonal light which is what I really am. So I put on a cloak of personality, a cloak of perceived form, and add the name to it so that you don't have to say, "Hey, you!" It is more convenient that way. I would know who you were talking to if you said, "Hey, you!" but I'm not sure you would.

No, I cannot tell any of you your guides' names, partly because they are also that light and if they choose to give themselves names in relationship to you, please understand that is not their Name with capital "N," it is simply the name they choose to use. Do they have a name beyond that? Do I have a name beyond that? Yes and no. You will discover if you come to meet that which we call the higher self, that that aspect of you has a name. But that is still simply a label tacked on to avoid the inconvenience of "Hey, you!"

Just as I have no self in the deepest meaning of that word, I also have no name. What need does emptiness have for a name? But I do exist, not as personal self that needs a name, but simply as the swirling light which I am, as that extension of the infinite which I am.

As for the name your guide chooses to go by, when you meet your guide and make that connection, ask them, "What is your name? What may I call you?" If you have been able to see or hear your guide or feel its energy, I have no doubt that you will be able to discern its name ... or more correctly, the label that it is choosing to use in this encounter. That is all.

Q: Could you speak of simultaneous lives and how they affect this one? Also, linear/non-linear time in lives?

Barbara: Aaron is saying, great question, but we'll save it for another night when we have more time.

Q: Say as specific as you can: What can you tell me about myself specifically? Who are my guides specifically? Do I know them? What good things are in my future? Specifics. What is my purpose? Who chose my purpose and why? What past lives have I lived? What was my religious experience about? Who was it from?

Aaron: I am Aaron. We cannot do this one justice in five minutes either, but we'll make an attempt at it. First of all, you are new here tonight. I beg your pardon my friend, but I cannot, I will not, be specific. We do speak about past lives in private work with people and even occasionally in a group like this where there is specific need to know about that past life. You have all had so many past lives, to simply pull one out would be meaningless. To pull out in front of a group the one that is most directly related to your current issues would very likely feel rather awkward and uncomfortable for you because you will find that the past lives that connect most to your current issues are often very painful ones, places where you were stuck in that life and are still stuck and struggling to understand.

I would like to suggest that those of you who want to see your past lives begin to meditate, and through this process become increasingly able both to hear your own guides and their guidance, to see those lives that you need to see. And, yes, you really

can see them. No, you are not imagining it. Your imagination could never be that vivid nor that specifically pointed to just what you need to learn.

Who are your guides? For all of you, they are beloved friends from past lifetimes and, on occasion, beings who were part of this lifetime. You each have a primary guide and a number of other guides. The primary guide is one who agreed to be your guide before your incarnation and who will not move into incarnation itself while you are still in body. Secondary guides may be those with whom there was a deep connection in this lifetime and who have died, have left their body. They are available to you until that time when they take incarnation again. If there is a deep tie and they see a need, they will wait for incarnation. If they see that you have connection with and guidance from other loving beings, they will feel free to move on their own path.

For the one who has asked this question, there was an elderly female relative who is presently one of your guides and is a very loving energy to you. It was not a connection which you as a child felt as a primary connection, but this being felt that deep love for you and continues it. You may find it useful to reach out to that being as part of the pathway to meeting your other guides and opening to the spirit guidance that's available to you.

This goes for all of you. No, not that all of you have elderly, now deceased, female relatives who are your guides. But if you look back on your life and think about some being who has left this plane with whom you felt a strong connection or from whom you felt deep love for yourself, you can ask. Meditate and open yourself, remembering that being's energy: "Are you still available to me?" The doors are always open from our side, but we cannot shout at you through your closed doors. You must open the door by asking, "Who is my guide? Is it you? Or is it you? Can I feel your energy?" And then don't tell yourself, "Oh, I'm only imagining it." Trust what you experience. Yes, you may be imagining it, but your imagination itself can serve as a pathway to opening the doors to the real guidance. Maybe it was not Aunt Sally but, because you trust Aunt Sally and rest in that imagined energy, it allows you to open the door to the real guidance that's offered. So trust.

Finally, what is your purpose? I cannot do justice to this question now. Our time is up. I must answer in a very general way which I'm sure will be unsatisfactory to the questioner. Your purpose, all of you ...

(Tape ends, but Aaron said we are all here to learn compassion, to live our lives with more wisdom and love, to find equanimity with what arises in us and to learn non-judgment. He spoke briefly about looking at what seems challenging to us in our present lives as a key to knowing our purpose: where do we find ourselves getting stuck? These are the primary issues we have incarnated to learn.)

Wednesday, November 24, 1993

(There are many new people here tonight.)

Aaron's talk

I am Aaron. Good evening and my love to all of you. I'm going to move in a rather different direction this week. We've been talking about this balance between relative and ultimate reality. The ways you rest in them both, the ways you work with mind and awareness within the relative reality and the ways you allow wisdom mind to cut through delusion in ultimate reality. Much of what we've been talking about has been somewhat abstract. We have applied it to your questions: "What do I do with the painful catalysts of the incarnation? What do I do with the anger, the desire and the fear?" But we haven't pinned it down precisely; it's been somewhat abstract.

I want to begin tonight with telling you a story. For some of you it may stretch your credulity quite a bit; that's fine. This is something that Barbara experienced, but if you are more comfortable seeing it as a dream, it makes no difference. The basic story elements remain the same, whether the person is real or simply a figment of Barbara's imagination. We're not trying to convince you of the truth of the story but only to share the story as a basis for discussion afterward. After Barbara moved through this experience I spent many hours discussing it with her. As I did so it felt to me that it touched on many areas of learning we've approached here and not gone into as deeply as I would have liked. We have been talking a bit about karma and grace, and this especially touches on their interrelationship. Also on the bardo states in between incarnations, and how one moves into the next incarnation, what stream pushes one. First the story. As I said, take it in any way you like.

I begin by saying that the experience Barbara had is not a new one to her. Barbara is a spiritual teacher and counselor. She does not choose who will come to her, but tries to open her door and her heart to any. She was asleep. I could almost say the doorbell rang, but it didn't, because what came to her door was discarnate energy. Within the dream, but totally unrelated to the dream, she heard whispered in her ear—I know she can not hear, but nevertheless there was "Pssst," and a loud whisper in her ear—"My name is not Joan, my name is Mirianna." It didn't fit with the dream at all; she thought somebody was in the room whispering. Yes, in her sleep she does not remember she is deaf; she does not lip read in her sleep, she hears in her sleep. So, in that blurry moment of waking she felt that somebody had entered her room and was whispering in her ear; it was that loud. She woke feeling a sense of horror, of darkness. Again the voice, "My name is not Joan, my name is Mirianna." It was demanding and desperate.

The first thing Barbara said was, simply, "How can I help you?" This voice said "Pray for me." Barbara felt a very heavy darkness. You know I do not use the term evil. There is light and there is relative absence of light. There is that which you may call God, Love, or truth, or the absolute. Or borrowing from the Buddhist Udana scripture, the Unborn, Undying, Unchanging, Uncreated. There is no absolute negativity in the same way that there is absolute positivity. There is only degree after degree of darkness, until it does get very dark indeed. But even that which is darkest is part of the light; it has come from

the light and in some distant time it will return to the light. This is your nature. That being in heavy darkness has not yet come to any understanding or acceptance of its nature.

Whatever we call it, that which Barbara experienced early in that morning was very pervasive and heavy. Because of the nature of her work, that she must frequently work with negative energy, Barbara is not intimidated by such, although she is certainly respectful of it and of its power. This first step then was to work to center and ground herself so that she could be a resource for this being that had asked for help. After centering herself and reconfirming her own truth, she did begin to pray for this being. She felt it was being pulled down a hole, that something was holding on to it and pulling, with its hand sticking out the top at the last moment saying "Help me." All Barbara could see was the fingers over the top. So, she figuratively grabbed hold.

Slowly this being's story emerged. Barbara spent, perhaps, two hours talking to her. She was in a hell realm of her own choosing. She had closed herself up there both because of the deeds she had done and because of her own fear and self condemnation, but it was not punishment. One is not put into a hell space, one creates that for oneself. Barbara began to see images. First she saw what this woman had done in her lifetime; it makes your horror movies look like fairy tales. Immediately there was some judgment in Barbara, but she realized this woman had been judging herself for however long. Many decades, I suggested. She had not come for judgment, but seeking the light. The larger story began to emerge. I will tell it very briefly so as to not invade this being's privacy beyond what is useful for instruction, but I do speak with her permission to share it.

The father terribly abused the female child named Joan. The mother turned her back on the abuse, denied it. When Joan cried or complained she told her "No, you be good!" And so this child named Joan grew up acting out the parentally requested model behavior of a child, but only by denying the other reality of her life. That other aspect of her suffered terribly at the hands of both her parents, one who forced his body upon her constantly and beat her as well, and one who totally denied the horror the child was living. The only way that Joan could survive this was to move out of her body. She became Mirianna. She even called herself Mirianna to her schoolmates and teachers. While the body of Joan was being abused, Mirianna consorted with the angels. She simply escaped completely, with no idea of what Joan was experiencing. This is typical multiple personality disorder. There was no connection between them. Joan's rage grew. Can you imagine the impossibility of being this proper, polite and loving young woman, with the rage, pain and torment Joan carried in her heart?

Joan finally exploded. Remember that Mirianna did not know what Joan experienced or did. Joan began to kill people, brutally, not people she knew, but innocent people. And as there was no connection between these murders, she was not apprehended for some time. Mirianna knew nothing about it. Mirianna was the good one who walked through the proper settings of Joan's life. Finally, Joan killed her parents, brutally, dismembering them.

This being suffered such torment after her death. Yes, she was put to death. On the spirit plane there was awareness of who Joan was. Mirianna needed to totally deny Joan: "Joan belongs in hell, I don't." There was no compassion for the terrible suffering she had experienced and there was no readiness for responsibility, only pointing the

finger of blame at her parents: "It's their fault, they turned me into what I was." This distortion completely closed her to any possibility of light. It was her own negativity that pulled her into that hell she created.

Barbara spent most of those two hours saying, no, she would not call her Mirianna and deny Joan, she would speak to Joan. Joan was worthy of beginning the process of healing; Joan and Mirianna must be integrated. I do not need to tell you in depth what Barbara told her. She told her what any of you would have told her in the same situation. During the time Barbara spoke with her she made no effort to understand the ideas behind what had happened. She kept feeling Joan/Mirianna pulled by negativity. She kept saying to that negativity, "You can not take her unless she agrees to go and she has not agreed; she has asked for help."

Barbara understood as she talked to her that it was negativity's pulling in that way, distorting, that finally tuned Joan/Mirianna into the fact that maybe there was some hope: "This negativity is trying so hard to pull me in. If I was truly that bad, that completely hopeless that I could never return to the light, it wouldn't have to try to pull me in. It would just turn its back on me and let me sink." It was at that point that she cried out "Help me!" There was just that tiny glimmer of understanding.

Barbara asked at one point, "Why me? There are far more powerful sources of light in the universe." Imagine a being that has been in a cave for fifty years, totally in darkness. Even a candle would barely be bearable. Part of the reason Barbara was asked to help was that Joan/Mirianna could not begin to approach brilliant light. She needed an intermediary to further approach light, one who was still partially within the shadow world herself. She also needed a human. On the higher realms there is no judgment. She needed to approach someone who contained judgment and also compassion. And this was her gift to Barbara, because as terrible as that woman's deeds were she evoked Barbara's deepest compassion. All judgment of her fell away. Barbara truly began to feel love for her. Perhaps that's what Joan/Mirianna most needed, to see that she could still be loved, that she was worthy of salvation. I am happy to be able to say that in the end Barbara was able to give her hand over to what we might call an angel. She allowed herself to be led where healing would begin.

It is then that Barbara and I began to talk. Yes, it was a rather long night for her. She knew that she could go back to sleep then, but was curious about what had transpired and rather full of energy, so we talked for a few more hours. Barbara also meditated and began to see many things more clearly for herself. There are a number of different places here that we will touch on.

First, I have told you that between lifetimes you decide what will be the next lifetime. I know there has not been complete clarity about that, but I decided at that time to leave it alone because I did not have a good way of explaining it more deeply. This is the question: how much choice do you have and how much does karma influence choice? In exactly what way does free will act?

Let us start with a image that Barbara had in meditation. It helped her and I hope it will help you. She began to see a river with a strong current, that river in which each of you is immersed. Sometimes there were small side-streams which wound their way about in a meandering flow, with almost no current to them. Those are the places where you can rest as long as you need to until the next incarnation. But the water is constantly

moving downstream, even when the current is slight. Eventually you emerge from that meandering bypass and back into the current. You can hold on to a branch and rest. But the seed of what is technically called *vinnana*, rebirth consciousness, will, once it is planted, draw you inexorably into the next lifetime.

How does free will work in choosing that lifetime? We've talked about looking at a blueprint of sorts, seeing what yet needs to be learned and what are the ideal conditions for learning. While that is all accurate there is more to it. Here you are in this river, pulling you downstream. Straight ahead of you there is a deep chasm. The river banks rise up high and trees close in, so that there is almost no light coming through. The waterbed descends sharply and contains huge boulders. You go over the edge, flung from rock to rock and down steep waterfalls! You are beaten by the elements. This might be the event of one moment or it might be a lifetime, you can read it either way. Then you emerge into a quieter pool. The current that started up at the top and came down that chasm, the main current, is drawing you into the next chasm. This is the habitual aspect of karma.

If you pay attention you'll feel the small eddies in the water, and a warmer, gentler current, pulling you to one side; there you see another stream. It is one where the banks are not so steep and there is more sunshine. It requires an effort of will to move yourself out of the habitual stream and into this gentler stream. Perhaps this is where what we call grace comes in.

For several weeks we have defined grace a bit here and there, but have never come to a definition of it. Grace relates to that source of love, call it God, call it pure awareness, call it whatever you wish. It is the source of light and love in the universe. It is the center that all energy comes to when it finally does come to center. That light is your true nature. I will not say that it's constantly available, it's more like a light house that turns its beacon, shining this way and this way and this way. If you miss it the first time around, it will be back! It only keeps going around. So, when I say that it's always available, it's always available somewhere, but it may not always be available deflected toward you. Not perhaps in this moment, but, yes, in the next moment. And if you miss it, it will be back.

We might use the metaphor of grace as that warm eddy of water that catches your attention because you are aware and says, "There is another way." My emphasis here is that **grace is always available, but you must pay attention to connect with it.** It is not a personal grace that singles one out because it has prayed for help (although prayer may connect with that help because through your prayer you enhance awareness). Grace is not saying, "Yes I'll answer this prayer, no I won't answer that one." Rather, your prayer is a statement of your readiness to be more responsible, to be ready to learn, to open your heart a bit from its prior constrictions of judgment and delusion. Hearing that intention, the light is focused on you. For Joan/Mirianna there was just such a moment of grace. It was a moment of awareness: "I do not have to continue to descend forever into this hell. There is a choice. There is light."

So, you go down this easier stream. You're still battered on the rocks a bit, the water is colder than you would like, the sun doesn't come through very well and there is a pool again at the bottom. Again, at either the end of this moment of catalyst or at the end of this lifetime, are you awake, or are you so busy blaming the boulders above you that

you miss that warm eddy of water? When you are aware, not caught in blame, not caught in dispersion, but fully present, you start to see the thousands and millions of alternative paths and you allow yourself to move more and more into a path of peace and joy.

The most important ideas I want to leave you with are that grace is always available and it is your option whether you choose to allow its presence or not. It is you who hold the window shut or open. What does this have to do with moving into the next lifetime? If you find yourself in that pool cursing at the rocks above that have skinned your legs and cut you, and below you are three more chasms, what you are learning and where you are karmically pulls you into one of those three chasms, which are all dark. As you ask those beings who might parent you to do so and arrange with them to be your parents, what you are arranging is to move into another lifetime of horror, continuing the flow into the next dark, rocky chasm.

But if the light caught your eye, if you were paying just that much attention, and made the small effort to move out of this fierce flow, you would see different streams. You will again incarnate into that lifetime in which you may work to resolve that old karma, but it's different at this point. Some of that old, habitual tendency has been changed. The heart is open. For Joan/Mirianna, had she continued to descend into that hell she would have reincarnated again into that hell, probably reincarnated into another very brutal lifetime, perhaps as another murderer. It is by her own acts (not on an incarnative plane but on the astral plane) that she has changed that flow.

This is the second point that Barbara and I talked about, the interval before becoming. This is the interval before movement into a different incarnation, often called the bardo state. Joan/Mirianna is beginning to look at the possibility of forgiveness towards herself and her parents. By the time she is ready for incarnation—while she is still responsible for all of those murders—she is not going to have to be murdered, have her body hacked into thousands of pieces lifetime after lifetime, as balance for what she did. There are other ways to balance that karma. Balance will be required. But it is likely that she will move into a lifetime with parents who are also working to learn forgiveness and non-judgment, and who will help to foster those qualities in her because that is what she's ready to learn.

So she will find beings who are working with the same issues of non-judgment and forgiveness and ask if they will parent her. She will seek a lifetime in which she will not be abused. As she learns what she needs to in that lifetime, she will turn even more towards the light. That turning can occur during the lifetime, it can occur at the moment of death, or it can occur in the bardo states between lifetimes. The precise way it happens is complex. If there is interest Barbara or I will be glad to explain it more deeply. I do not think it is necessary to go into all the fine details at this point and thereby encourage intellectualizing. You are not presently in that state, you are here in incarnation, and our emphasis has been on what we do with the catalysts of the incarnation. I share this present information because each moment between one tumultuous happening and the next one is analogous to a bardo state. It is a place of resting before you move on. Do you rest in hatred, fear and delusion, or do you begin to use love and wisdom to cut through that in the ways we've been practicing? Do you use your meditation practice to understand what has arisen and how attachment and aversion have formed? Is awareness present? With awareness you may shift the weight

to ultimate reality and come back to this sense of who you truly are, to the divinity of you.

Each time you work in either or both ways, working with the real catalysts of the moment and resting in pure awareness, you create new seeds for the next moment. Each new moment is a kind of rebirth. In these ways you really can affect karma. Yes, you will still be responsible for harm you have done, but there are far gentler ways to work out the responsibility for harming another than receiving harm. Joan/Mirianna may serve those beings she murdered in myriad ways, helping each of them on their path. She may atone in that way for what she did. Balance is created by what she is able to give them from her new place of understanding.

And this is also true in your moment to moment lives. If you've blown up at your child or partner, screamed and raged at them, it's not enough to say "I'm sorry." You can say "I'm sorry" ten thousand times and it's never completely sincere if there is no sense of responsibility behind the "I'm sorry." But when you look deeply into that person's pain that you have caused by your rage and understand your responsibility for that pain, then you may work with that being to help alleviate that pain. It is no longer their pain, nor yours, but shared pain. You may help them find deeper understanding about their own pain. In this way you serve them and balance that karma.

It was a fascinating evening for Barbara, if one in which she got little sleep. She's deeply grateful to this being for knocking on her door and teaching her. There is much more that Barbara and I covered that night. I do not want to talk too long here. I want to allow you your break and leave time for your questions. I would be glad to answer further questions about this whole story. I thank you for your attention. That is all.

*January 6, 1994. **Barbara:** As I sat here this morning cleaning up this transcript, I prayed for Joan/Mirianna and asked what had become of her. I was offered an image of this woman, this energy, looking like an invalid, dressed in what seemed like a white hospital gown. A nurse/angel—a very loving energy dressed in soft white, radiating soft white—walked beside her and supported her. Joan/Mirianna paused often to pull open tiny slats in the window shades in the hallway where she walked, and look out. She was careful not to open them too far. She still cannot bear much light. But she is healing and learning. I sent her my loving wishes for her continued emergence into the light. I feel real gratitude for the opportunity to have served this sister in a small way.*

Questions

Question: Aaron has said we don't lose lessons previously learned, however a certain person was probably not a murderer before, so if we choose abusive parents it would seem we risk sinking into unskillful behavior. Can you comment on that, Aaron?

Aaron: I am Aaron. The clearest way I can comment on that is to return us to the river. We've moved ourselves from the chasm, we've entered a gentler stream. But as we go down there are still boulders that bark our shins, the water is still cold and while there are patches of sunlight, there is still shadow.

If you drift down that stream blaming the rocks for being present, blaming the water for being cold, blaming the trees for casting shadows, you go through that same kind of stream many, many times. You're not learning, not seeing how self has solidified and

aversion sprung from that solid self, but just casting blame on everything else. The boulders are just being boulders. It is the solid self that imagines the boulders to have a personal vendetta. Once you clearly see that the boulders are just being boulders, then you understand it is your choice, to continue down that chasm or to seek a stream that is freer of boulders. What happens, metaphorically, is that your attention becomes so ingrown at lashing out, rather than seeing clearly, that you get swept into the colder, fiercer current of the deeper chasm again. This is part of it. In describing being swept into the deeper chasm I'm speaking of people who move back to a lifetime of intense suffering. This is only one reason.

Part of it may simply be, let us call it unfinished business with the being with whom you incarnate. Karma is not a blanket that's clean or dirty, black or white. There are many streams of karma. You can have clarified many things and still have one area that is totally unresolved. Karma is not punishment, but learning. It invites you into where you need to learn. What do we do with the child who's failing its arithmetic class? The teacher invites the child to come after school and go over the material. The child may come in cheerfully, pay attention, learn and get a good grade on the next exam. Or the child may come in reluctantly, saying "It's not fair!" pay no attention and keep failing regardless of how skillfully the teacher tries to encourage and excite the child about the subject. It's simply the child's attitude: "I'm not gonna do this, I won't be responsible." So, the child must repeat the class.

The third possibility is part of re-balancing karma but also offers one the opportunity to see if you really learned this. You incarnate into the heavier lifetime with some degree of clarity and the intention to try to open the door for the other being who had been trapped in that karmic situation with you. Can you maintain that clarity through the situation or lifetime? If not then you still don't really have it clearly and you need to work on it again. It is harder when the situation is heavier, and yet those heavy situations in some ways offer the best opportunities for learning. They really push you to the wall. Are you going to open your heart or not? It's much easier to move into blindness when you are in a situation that doesn't challenge you in that way. You just stop paying attention. So this third possibility is that the incarnation with abusive parents was taken to help the parent learn something, to balance past karma by offering oneself as teacher to that parent. And also to see for yourself: did I really learn it? Can I get through it this time without turning into a murderer, without blaming others? Because certainly every being that has an abusive parent doesn't turn into an ax murderer. Does this answer the question? Are there further questions related to this? That is all.

Barbara: John is asking: When we make plans with someone who will parent us, do we know in advance they are going to be abusive? Let me answer this a little bit from what Aaron has taught me.

Because we ask them before they incarnate and we don't know what's going to happen to them in that eighteen, twenty, thirty years before we're ready to move into incarnation, we ask a number of prospective parents to parent us. We have the agreement with a number of beings with whom there's a connection, with whom we feel there might be a good opportunity for learning. Then we look at where they are before we are ready to move into incarnation. Which body are we going to move into? They've all agreed to parent us if the situations are right. Well, maybe person A's spirit is saying "I need to learn to practice forgiveness and compassion, I need to learn not to

move to rage, to value myself. In order to learn that I need parents that will give me some support. But, if they give me too much support and there's nothing that's a negative catalyst I'm not going to be forced to look at the rage within me. So, I need something that will be somewhat abusive and somewhat supportive. This one's out because he/she grew up in a situation that was totally abusive and he/she is a raging maniac. That's not what I need. This one's out because she's moved to Africa and is living in poverty. That's not the right situation for me. This one seems just right. So, this parent seems right and I even have a karmic connection with the partner too." We still don't know if that parent is going to be abusive, but we know there is the possibility for abuse because the parent reacts quickly and loses its temper quickly, but it is working with learning how to forgive and how to be more skillful in its life. So, that's why we choose that one.

Question: What puzzles me is that we like to think that we are getting closer to the light with each incarnation, but it seems that it's quite possible to regress. I think Aaron understands what I'm concerned about.

Aaron: I am Aaron. An abusive childhood, a childhood of deprivation, or an adult life where one is scorned by some does not necessitate an adult who is suffering or who is abusive. Look, if you will, at the later part of the lifetime of the one who was known as Jesus. He was crucified. But he wasn't in a dark chasm. He offered to move into that lifetime in service to others. There are very beautiful children, who grow into very beautiful adults, who move through much heaviness in their childhood. It simply reconfirms the light for them. You can not presume that an abusive childhood means that this being has done something bad in the past and is stuck in a negative karmic stream. It is not the situation but how you relate to the situation. Some beings see all the streams spread out and enter the one where they can do the most good. Some beings see all the streams spread out and say to themselves, "These will be much gentler, but I really need to test myself and see if I finally have learned this; I'm diving into that one." Does that answer your question?

Response: It doesn't necessarily follow that being abused leads to unskillful behavior later, however, it appears that it is still a big risk.

Aaron: I am Aaron. It is a big risk. The being who enters such a chasm in offering to serve must be very, very aware. One who enters to serve, but filled with ego: "I'm going to be the servant," that one very often gets caught. To make that kind of movement there must be real purity, clarity and real emptiness of self. So that there is no servant and served, just heart connection. What muddles this is that there is not just one motivation, nor one strand of karma that leads you into an incarnation. If that were so it would be very simple. There is a dog toy in the house that illustrates this wonderfully; I wonder if Hal can find the toy "braid." We will meditate silently while he looks. ... (*Hal hands the toy to Barbara—Aaron thanks him. It is three large, intertwined strands of rope, each strand made up of many smaller strands in a variety of colors.*) It's not just a braid with three strands, but each strand has innumerable pieces that make it up. So many different streams of karma. Of course there are the basic lessons of a lifetime, but you're learning so much. All of those thousands of pieces of karma, thousands of streams. Let's say that the pink strands are the real aspiration to serve and purify one's energy. The blue strands are the anger, the greed, the rage, the fear, the delusion of

self. You will notice that within any heavy rope there are several different colors. The decision to move into that chasm of a very heavy lifetime comes both from a place that says "Perhaps I can be of service here," even if that's one one-millionth of the motivation. Yes, it may come from complete blindness that just sweeps you along in this samsaric cycle, that's one possibility. But as the being becomes more and more aware the multitude of motivations come into play.

Yes, there is a risk. There's always a risk. Do you think that there is a lesser risk if one were to move into a life of great plenty, of wealth, of very loving parents? One would be nurtured and cared for but, perhaps, one would never learn independence. Perhaps one would never come to understand suffering. Do you know the story of the Buddha's boyhood? He was raised as a prince and his father went to great effort to hide from him the reality of suffering in the world. He never saw illness, death or hunger. But he was curious and he moved out beyond his boundaries. He went out into the city. "Why is that man sitting on the curb?," he asked his older companion. This companion said, "He is sick." The prince asked, "What is sickness? What about that one whose face looks lined and can hardly walk?" The companion responded, "She is old; she's dying." Until then he did not know what sickness or death were.

Eventually every being reaches that place of illness and of death. Is one necessarily better prepared for it because one had a childhood free of pain? Might one be better prepared for the suffering that necessarily emerges in the human lifetime if one has had the repeated practice of finding space for that pain, finding ways to forgive and move away from judgment?

When I use this metaphor of the dark chasm I see that there is a distortion in that metaphor, and yet I can not think of another way to phrase it. I use the dark chasm with a heavy current mostly to illustrate the way one can be swept blindly from one incarnation to another, or from one moment to another, never seeing that one's rage and blame is truly that which has kept one captive. Entering the dark chasm knowingly is very different than being swept into it through delusion. Does that clarify it for you? That is all.

Barbara: *(Reading question, comments that Aaron is laughing and likes the question.)* Everybody and every book says that to benefit from meditation you have to do it regularly. My question is: why? Why can't it be like a medicine, I do it when I need it? Your comments please.

Aaron: I am Aaron. Lets start this with a question: who are you? You each have many concepts about who you think you are. This body, these thoughts, this brain, these skilled hands or whatever special artistic skills you may possess, this way of relating to the world, this stream of consciousness. You start to think that these are who you are. Body, mental formations, consciousness.

Meditation is not a medicine that you take when the distortion becomes too severe. Meditation is a way of being, not something to do. You meditate regularly because that's the only way to begin to fully move into that way of being. What is this way of being? It is allowing yourself to fully enter that state of your true nature, to rest in that pure awareness, free of the delusion of self, of separation. It is that place of ultimate connection with all that is. You are here to learn to live your lives from that space. To do so is to live your deepest truth. You can't do that on a now-and-then, when it's

convenient, or it hurts not to, basis. The only way to live that deepest truth is to become meditation. And to become it you must practice it regularly.

Yes, the practice is a "doing." It's like practicing swimming. Imagine somebody who effortlessly moves across a lake, very gracefully. They are fully at one with the water. Then you jump in and you practice: "How do I turn my head? How do I kick my feet? How do I move my arms? How do I put it all together?" You are "doing." You're not at all one with the water, you are learning the skills that will eventually come together and allow you to move into that effortless oneness. Meditation takes that same practice, to move from doing to being meditation. So, that is why it needs to be regular. That is all.

Question: When you talk about meditation I am reminded of a saying from the Bible that says when some crisis happens, the way to treat it is to be still. That kind of training is related to Buddhist non-action. I was wondering, relative to regular meditation, if there is some connection between all of these religious activities that train us to be our higher self. Being still, non-action, does not come naturally.

Barbara: By non-action do you mean, literally, non action, or not reacting, but moving from a skillful place of center?

Response: I am not very clear myself. But I just read a book that called non-action not doing something ... It doesn't mean that you do nothing. Is there is some connection between all of these religious activities? Is meditation training to be that higher self?

Aaron: I am Aaron. I understand your question. Where there is reactivity that springs from a place of self it may wish to defend itself. It may be defending itself in a more subtle way, which is to be uncomfortable with what is happening and want to be the fixer. If there is a child who has fallen off its bike and scraped its knee, and is sitting there in the street crying, a part of your heart doesn't plan, it simply moves to embrace and help the child. It's not helping because it's uncomfortable with the child's pain, it's helping because the child is in pain. But there is also a part that is uncomfortable with another's pain and wants to fix it. The compassionate movement comes from a place of emptiness of self; the fixer is part of ego. Both motivate the action.

It doesn't really matter if you are literally being attacked in some verbal or physical way and moving to a solid self that defends, or whether you are defending through being the fixer that fixes another's pain so that you won't have to be present with it. There is still somebody doing. As long as there is somebody doing, adhering karma is created. Different religious systems give different terms here. But each system teaches to move from a space that is free of ego. Buddhism talks about it in terms of cutting through delusion of self. Christianity asks you to surrender that self, to move deeper into the Christ mind. These terms Christ-consciousness, Buddha-consciousness, essentially refer to moving from that place of absolute center, free of the distortion of a self who is moving to protect itself.

To be free of the distortion of self protection doesn't mean that you don't step out of the street if a truck is coming, but that action comes from that place of pure awareness which values this body as the home for the spirit; it is to be cherished, you take care of it, you move it carefully back from harm. That is not reaction, you're not striking in anger at the car as it goes past, with thought that it could have hurt you, you're simply moving back.

This that you call non-action is a way of learning to move from that place of center. It does not mean that you do not act. If a child has fallen in the middle of the street and traffic is coming, non-action does not say "I'm just going to sit here, I'm not going to react." You are always responsible, not only for what you do, but for what you do not do. If you could have saved the child and didn't, you are responsible. Non-action, rather, is what allows you to act from a place of emptiness of self, where there is no more ego motivation. There is no desire to save the child in order to be the good one. There's no anger at the car that's coming. There is just clear seeing of the situation and very skillful and loving movement to do what is necessary in this moment. No old mind, just what's necessary in this moment.

So, non-action is a fuzzy kind of term, if I correctly interpret your meaning. It might be more clearly stated "non-action from ego." Such non-action is the core of every known religion. Coming to rest in that place of pure awareness, coming to rest in the heart of God, coming to rest in the Tibetan-Buddhist term rigpa, pure awareness empty of the delusion of self, and also able to move from that space.

There is in the Christian bible some talk about a rock from which the water flows. This water, this river of love, of pure awareness, of God, this is the true nature of all of us, this divinity that flows through all that is. The labels you put on it are culturally conditioned concepts which we paste on to something that is totally beyond concept so as to give ourselves some way to speak of it. We all seek to learn how to touch that rock in such a way that we can feel the pure water flowing out. The one who comes grasping to the rock will not find the pure water. The one who scorns the rock will never find it. The one who comes to it with an open heart, with faith and without the concept of a self doing it, that one will find the spring and allow itself to be fully immersed in that spring and nourished by it. That, to me, is the core of every major world religion. To learn to be nourished by that spring, and to allow that nourishment to move through you and extend to others. It matters not what we label the spring. Does that answer your question?

Response: (*Question is difficult to hear; transcription may not be correct.*) Does meditation take us out of ego centeredness?

Barbara: This is Barbara. Meditation works in two different ways. On one level of relative practice it starts to show us how often we are moving from a place of ego and we just become more aware of that and begin to train ourselves not to do so. At another level, deeper meditation is like a sword that cuts through the ego completely and we start to see that the ego was never real. It is a construct that we created, out of habit, out of fear. But, on that ultimate reality level there never was an ego in the first place. We don't train ourselves not to live from that space, we start to see that we don't need to relate to that at all. We learn to have compassion for the being who keeps getting stuck in this delusion that there is a self. The two legs: ultimate and relative reality.

C: I'm thinking about the picture which is very familiar to many of us; it's an optical illusion of an old woman's face with a long nose but, also, if you look at the picture in a different way it is a beautiful young woman with a hat. It is another wonderful example of the way we are looking at things.

Barbara: We're so often stuck in looking at it one way. We are so stuck in being this self, this aspect of the illusion, that we never quite caught on that it's never been there at

all. When I say it's just a construct, do you know what I mean? Does it make sense? But, we can't come into a painful situation and feeling ourselves solidify and ego growing say, "Oh, it's just illusion," because that's denial. Then we are cutting out the human aspect of us that's feeling very real pain, and the pain is not illusion. The self is an illusion, but the pain is real. So, we really need that balance between ultimate and relative reality. We can't deny the relative world. It's this balance of wisdom and compassion. In the relative world we need to open our hearts in compassion, in the ultimate plane we learn wisdom, but there has got to be a balance.

C: I have a little story I would like to share. On Sunday night I returned from our retreat. I was very openhearted and quiet. I had a hard time connecting with Co., he was just on a different wavelength. He did something which upset me and I was very aware. I had one foot in the mud of being very upset and another foot in that whole concept of being an angel, being very loving and understanding. I went to sit for a while and found myself able to be compassionate to that angry part of me. It felt a little bit like the one part was hugging the other part and a wrestling match was going on inside me. All of a sudden I thought, "Oh, this is what the story of Jacob is all about, where he wrestled all night with angels, his human self was wrestling with his divine self." It just went on and on until I had that realization and then I said "Oh, good," and let that angel hold the human, angry part and went to sleep. It was not ending it, it just was okay. It was a place to be.

Barbara: I'm paraphrasing Aaron who is saying this is also in the story he told when you first came, about Joan/Mirianna, the two very separate aspects of her. She was saying, "I'm not this one I am that one." and what she needed was to integrate them. So, (I'm still paraphrasing Aaron) he's saying what we need to do, all of us, is to learn that integration. Aaron wants to say something here.

Aaron: I am Aaron. A bit of homework here for those who would like to pursue this further. This week, each time you come out of a chasm, look around at the rocks that have cut and bruised you. Notice the desire to blame. See how the more you stay stuck in that blaming mind, that self wanting to defend, the more easily you get swept into the next chasm. After an argument with somebody and the wounds from it (I don't mean physical wounds necessarily but feeling pain from it), notice the desire to blame them.

Your self is solidified, you're mired in this muck, and when the next situation comes along, it might even be a relatively mild kind of situation, perhaps somebody interrupts you when you're talking and you blow up entirely out of proportion to the event itself. You're just entering another chasm. Now, what I want you to do when you get to the end of a chasm, when the turmoil has quieted down a bit and you just find yourself standing there feeling anger, be aware and ask: who is feeling anger? Am I stuck in this current? Is it pulling me on into a continuation of the same stream ... *(Tape ended.)*

Private excerpt

Aaron: I am Aaron. I am speaking about intimacy in relationship to both animate and inanimate energy. We tend to think of the energy field as one field, which it is, but has four aspects: the physical energy field, emotional, mental and spiritual.

On the light plane, when two energies relate they blend. I will define terminology not as any absolute definition but only so that we may use it consistently and with understanding of what is meant. By “blend,” I mean this: envision ten thousand molecules of red and ten thousand of blue. The red are contained within the red body, the blue contained within the blue body. These bodies may come together as a physical blending—sexual union—an emotional blending—heart opening to heart—a mental blending of ideas, a spiritual blending—souls moving together. Or there may be any combination of these.

On the light plane there is no physical body, but there is an energy template of the physical body. The outlines of red and blue dissolve so that the red dots and blue dots mingle freely. There is no longer any outline. This is how it might appear:

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On the physical plane, such full blending is rare. Instead, energy tends more to merge. The best metaphor I can give for this is fingers resting not only within one another, but so that the fingers move onto the hand—the red fingers onto the blue hand, the blue onto the red. If these were transparencies, you would still see the outline of red hand and blue hand, the outline where they overlap, but still the delineation of boundary.

[illegible]

At a very deep level, you aspire to blend. This is your original form, blended with the Source. With the first emergence of illusion of self, you drew into an intactness of form, created boundaries from which this "self" could relate to others. You have spent the time since attempting to re-blend. We will discuss this in depth tonight.

Wednesday, December 1, 1993

(We begin by reading an introduction to intimacy in relationship and to the concepts of blending energy and merging energy in preparation for Aaron's talk. Barbara further clarifies the distinction between blending and merging. A brief sharing of experiences of merging follows with additional questions for Aaron to consider.)

(Barbara reads from transcript 93/12/01P channeled that morning.)

F: When I smile I feel like boundaries dissolve and separation largely dissolves. When I smile down at my body, that dissolves my "self" best.

J: Sometimes with the Sufi dancing, especially when the other person is able to also let the walls down and really look back into your eyes, I experience that sense of blending with their energy, of losing the boundaries of the body.

K: What J said raised a question for me, which is, how is this blending affected by one person's being open and the other not so open? Is the open person's energy able to blend even though the other person is feeling fear?

Barbara: Aaron says he'll talk more about it but, if you can picture this, the person who is less open maintains their boundary but their energy is moving out a little bit beyond the edges, and that little bit moves all through and infiltrates the person that's open. The open person's energy cannot push through the boundaries the closed person is maintaining. It's the other person's choice whether they want to let go of their boundaries or not. But if one person has let go of the boundaries, it's an invitation to the other to do so, which is why smiling works and why looking in people's eyes works ... because that's a very clear statement, "I'm letting go of my boundaries."

K: I'm aware of two movements when I'm conscious of relating to another. There is a part of me that yearns to let all the boundaries go and blend and be totally open. And there is a part of me that will only go so far and then feels fear of losing myself at some deep level, of total dissolution, of melting into I don't know what, and losing my intactness.

Barbara: Aaron is asking, does it work the other way, too, when there's fear of not losing one's boundaries? Are there times when, instead of being afraid of losing our boundaries, we want to get rid of our boundaries to escape the sense of isolation and separateness, so that blending becomes a kind of "grasping at," rather than "allowing" and "letting-go-into." Can you think of times when it's one way for you and times when it's the other way?

R: I have an additional lesson with all this in terms of never having known my boundaries and always having been open to everyone without discrimination and learning to ... I'm having difficulty finding the words. I'm learning about boundaries and I need to recognize my boundaries, and yet blend within that new understanding.

Aaron: I am Aaron. I want to speak very briefly about the question that's just been raised about one who has not established boundaries. Your boundaries are both painful confinement and useful tool. You have moved into an incarnation where you're besieged by constant catalyst. Yes, you are learning to stay open, but there's a

difference between learning to stay open, which becomes an act of free will choice, and never having learned how to close oneself in the first place, which leaves you at the mercy of all that assaults at you.

This learning of boundaries is usually something that comes to the infant as it first begins to distinguish itself from its mother. Very occasionally, for one reason or another, such boundaries are not established. For the individual who has not firmly established its boundaries, that is a necessary first step: not to move into fear and a withdrawal into a boundary because of fear, but learning to identify this illusion that we call self, learning to feel the difference between relating to the world from that place of self known as illusion or a place of none-self. That none-self is a nihilistic denial of one's own energy born from fear of one's own energy. It's only when you are comfortable with "self" that you can begin to experience interbeing in its truest meaning, begin to fully work with the catalysts of the incarnation and learn what you came to learn.

I'm going to keep this bit of it brief. I want to hear what other questions there may be before I go into the longer talk about this. We will touch again on this last question if it's useful. That is all.

F: To be able to discern between merging and lack of clear identity of small self is a confusing issue for me. Am I giving to others out of true love or insecurity?

Barbara: I'm paraphrasing Aaron who is raising the point he's made many times that we have multiple motivations for what we do. Aaron is saying that we've talked very, very often here about the ways we use our emotional energy—giving to other people from a place of generosity or to solidify ourselves, using it in different ways. What he wants to do tonight is give us a clearer picture from his perspective of what's happening with our energy fields. He has the sense that we will be able to begin to really see the ways we use our energy fields as gift, as protection, as weapon and that, in any one movement—of giving or not giving—we have multiple motivations. So we're using our energy field in all of those ways, sometimes at the same time. But it's part of deepening mindfulness, of moving to such a deep awareness that we really can feel what happens to our energy field.

If somebody came into this room now raging, angry, he wouldn't have to say anything. He'd get to the door and stand there in the doorway. Is there anyone in the room who doesn't think they'd feel his rage? If somebody came into the room now just really filled with love, we probably would all feel that, too.

We are already experiencing this. We're often not aware of it. So what Aaron is hoping to do tonight is to bring us to deeper awareness of the four aspects of our energy field and the ways we use them. He's saying right now that this is by no means an in-depth survey of it; he's just touching the surface. It does relate, though, to the light body work we've been doing recently.

(Barbara repeats the demonstration of light body purity and illusionary wrinkles for those who are newcomers tonight. She wrinkles a pure white, unwrinkled piece of paper, points out that within the wrinkled sheet, the perfect unwrinkled sheet still exists.)

What Aaron wants to get into tonight is talking about the ways we project our energy is very differently when we think we're the wrinkle than when we think we're the perfect sheet of paper. The sheet of paper that's perfectly smooth projects its energy in a very

loving, open way. The wrinkle projects its energy to control. It's wrapped up in its "wrinkledness" instead of being able to identify with its perfection.

We're both. We all have those wrinkles. But that's not who we are. When we project our energy maintaining boundaries, we're using our energy as a weapon projected to others and we're losing track of our perfection. Aaron?

Aaron is suggesting enough paraphrasing. It's time for him to get into this and speak for himself!

A: I think you were touching upon this earlier. I'm interested in the blending/merging of myself with my guides. I notice times when there seems to be merging and then snapping back to self-awareness. Back and forth, back and forth. Also, I'm interested in how the merging process works with the team of spirit guides that work with you (*with Barbara*) with acupuncture and acupressure and how the ability to merge or not merge affects that healing.

Aaron's talk

I am Aaron. Somewhat belated greetings and love to all of you. This is by no means going to be the definitive, in-depth talk about energy. We'll touch on bits and pieces of it, putting it together like a jigsaw puzzle week after week, as we have been doing. This is simply one piece of the puzzle, but an important one.

As always, my prime interest here is not simply a metaphysical one. What I am interested in is helping you to understand how you may live your lives with more love, with more skill and more wisdom ... how you may allow your energy to blend with others where appropriate without moving into a, let's call it an unwholesome, co-dependent blending.

Let me begin by saying that, on the light body plane, you are totally blended and you always have been. It's like that sheet paper: the perfect sheet of paper is there. It also has wrinkles. The total blending of your energy is there as is the defendedness that asks you to withdraw and put up boundaries.

I am not speaking here of one who has never learned to put up those boundaries. This is a different issue and one that we can touch on again during the question period. Most of you have learned to build those boundaries too well and you're looking for ways to dissolve the boundaries.

So, the first step is to realize the boundaries are illusion. And yet, within the physical plane manifestation, within this relative reality, the boundaries are real.

As I suggested in this handout, we need to address the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energy fields as four related but different areas of energy wherein you create different kinds of boundaries and for different reasons. Let's simply go through them one at a time.

The spiritual energy field. As J put it, when you look into somebody's eyes, one soul meets another. You're not talking, you're not touching. Those of you who have done this Sufi dance with us, where we look into one another's eyes, have deeply experienced that letting go of boundaries. There is no aspect of escape there, no desire to flee your isolation by grasping at merging with another. Rather, it's the

allowing of that natural merging so that in physical incarnation you are truly reflecting the natural blend of the light bodies.

For the other three, some of you find one easier than another. Some of you who maintain a defendedness for yourself in your sexuality and in your openness of feelings, can meld your minds with another, move into a very deep mental discussion of philosophy, of values. It's still separated from emotions. It's not a passionate discussion but a collected, calm discussion. But there is tremendous joy in merging your mind with another in this way. Most of you have probably known that merging at some time or another.

You can merge or even begin to blend on the emotional level, truly opening your heart to another, pouring out your joy and your grief. You start to feel deep compassion and love, and the compassion that you feel for the other comes also to you. You lose your sense of separateness, feel yourself deeply attuned to the other's heart. Again, most of you have experienced this at least occasionally.

Your sexuality, when it is only sexual, can never be more than a merging. Your energy fields come together and they do overlap, but you each maintain your boundaries, even through the pulling together of that sex act. Some of you find that you cannot move freely into a sexual relationship with somebody for whom there's much love. It seems contrary to you. When there is deep love it's hard to open yourself completely sexually.

As I see this kind of situation, the deep love has allowed that blending of emotional energy. There's part of you that is still wanting to maintain a boundary for safety, so there's got to be holding back somewhere. It expresses itself within your sexuality. It may be used the opposite way, too. There may be a complete blending through the physical bodies. Moving out of that sexual union, you may feel your heart closed to the other being with a great pang of pain, wondering "What's wrong? I really thought I loved this person and suddenly I realize I'm looking at her or him beside me and judging them." It is your pulling back into boundaries, into defendedness.

Sometimes just understanding what you are doing helps you to see the separation that's happening in a different perspective, to be able to say, "I'm simply withdrawing out of need to stay safe. It's just fear." Being able to label it as fear can help to reopen the heart and reforge the connection.

I want to move back a step. No two of you are alike. You each move into these processes in your own unique way. All of you came into incarnation originally as being that which I call "spark of God," spark of the Eternal. There was that moment for each of you where you moved from what seemed to be perfect union, no boundaries, into self-awareness and its accompanying sense of duality. Many of you have been searching since that first moment of self-awareness for some way to return to that purest blending of energy and end of the sense of separation and isolation. As long as you are grasping at that, it becomes impossible because there's someBODY trying to escape this and move into that.

When you begin to allow, to intend connection and allow the manifestation of that connection which is already true on the light plane to move through the physical, emotional and mental bodies, you have a very different experience. It's the experience

of coming to know the perfect smooth sheet of paper, coming to that view of ultimate reality where you really begin to be able to live your interconnection.

That's where you all are headed. That is not where you are. Let's come back to where you are and the distorted ways in which you use your energy.

What I'd like you each to do now is to think of some time—today, if possible, or in the past few days—when somebody said something to you that felt a bit threatening. It may not have been anything really negative. Somebody perhaps just said, "Your shoe is untied," but there was that voice that heard your mother or father saying, "Look at you, you're so sloppy, your shoe is untied." You reverted to old mind and you became defended. Or perhaps somebody said, "I don't like what you just said," or "We're late, please hurry." Something that made you pull into yourself.

What I want you to do is think about that experience. Can you see the way that that perceived threat brought you into a sense of self and other, that you might be hurt in some way or your needs not met, and the defenses came up, even if momentarily? Perhaps you were able to work very skillfully with them and lower them again, reopen your energy. Just observe that moment of perceived threat.

We speak about equanimity with emotion. This does not mean not feeling emotion, but that there may be no defendedness arising around it. Not owning the emotion. Some of you find that you can be undefended on the mental level and on the spirit level. You can make that eye contact and really allow yourself to blend with another's spirit energy. You can share thoughts. But as soon as it becomes more personal, touching the emotional or physical body's energy, the walls go up. Other of you, fewer perhaps, may find it works the opposite way. For most people though, it is easier to share mental and spiritual energy. It's less personal and, therefore, less likely to threaten, so there's less defendedness about it.

In order to be ready to move beyond this third density incarnative experience and to move into fourth density, there needs to be, not the cessation of arising of emotion or defendedness, but a willingness to treat even that defendedness of energy as just something else that's happening. "Here I am defending myself, pulling back and creating boundaries. Can I let go?" Again and again and again, seeing how you move into that defendedness and letting go.

The more you practice with this, the less there is the sense of self and other; the more your heart opens in compassion to all of you; the more openheartedly you begin to relate to your own distortions of the use of energy. Some of these distortions are very potent. Your energy is a powerful weapon. If somebody's energy field is open to you and, out of a sense of righteous anger or desire to defend or for whatever reasons, you take advantage of their open energy to push, stab at them, in a sense, that's a very powerful weapon.

For example, if somebody comes up to you very open and says, "I'm sorry for what happened. I made a mistake," they're really opening their energy to your pain. Sometimes there may be inclination to use that openness as a way to provoke guilt in them or to manipulate and control them. These are all ways of maintaining safety of this that we've come to call "self."

There's nothing wrong, my dear ones, with wanting to stay safe. The problem is that you get so lost in the illusion that you're unsafe that you seek to control and defend, to manipulate, all the time. It becomes a habit. The more you habituate yourself that way, the more solid the walls seem. And then you cry out, "Why am I so alone? Why do I feel so separate? Why are they pushing me away?" when you are creating your own separation.

We've talked about this in many ways: the different kinds of unwholesome patterns that you get into as humans, how you may bring awareness to those patterns. In order to start to bring awareness to the patterns, it's very useful to look at what resistance there is, what desire to hold onto the patterns. One of the easiest ways I know to perceive this is to begin to bring attention ... (*Tape ended.*)(to the energy fields and arising of defendedness ...)

(*Tape begins.*) ... because it is something with which you are so familiar. If you pay attention, you truly can start to see when you close off. You can begin to ask yourself, "Do I need to defend myself right now?" Maybe there's a raving maniac out there, screaming at you, cursing at you, and you really don't want to blend your energy with them. There is a point where it's skillful to maintain your boundaries. When you choose to maintain your boundaries, know that you are doing so and why.

Some of you may see that by maintaining your boundary against this furious person, you are not letting yourself be used as a doormat by that person and that's skillful. But you may also see that you're simultaneously shutting them out of your heart, judging them, condemning them as another way of trying to stay safe ... at which point you may find that you can allow some of the boundaries to dissolve in some of the bodies. You may allow the spirit energy to merge, for example, to find what we call that of God within them.

You don't have to allow the emotional bodies to blend or even to merge, nor the physical bodies to touch in any way. Do you need also to shut off at the mental and spirit level? If you are able to remain open, seeking for that of the divine within the other, allowing a blending on that level, can you then hear the other's pain better? Allow then a merging of the mental bodies? Might that open your heart to the other so that, instead of feeling threatened by his or her emotionality and needing to create a self-other duality to defend, you begin to hear their pain and your pain as one pain?

What I want you to see is that you can control this at any level, or allow it. You don't have to shut off all four. What are you shutting off and why? When do you choose to re-allow that merging? The place to start is with noticing, "Shutting down: creating boundaries." Just that. A very simple label: "boundaries." See if you can notice this over and over and over through the coming week: "What makes me set up these boundaries? What happens after I've set them up, if I try to allow the lowering of them, one at a time?"

If you and your partner have just had a fight, the first lowering of the boundary may be simply taking that person's hand, allowing a re-merging of physical energy. You're still defended on the emotional level. Can you then look in their eyes and start to allow, not only the physical merging, but the souls to begin to come together?

Remember that this illusion of separation is not a curse of the incarnative experience, but a gift of the incarnative experience. It's very different when seen in that way. You are not incarnate to overpower the illusion of separation and get rid of it but to begin to transcend it by allowing the truth of your connectedness to reassert itself, not through force but through very gentle loving and allowing of that connection.

Will you look at this in the coming week? I would very much like to hear from you as to what insights you had.

I also want to say here before I close that every year I share some Christmas stories. Last year we saved them for the last meeting before Christmas and had a snow storm on that day. There were only six or seven of you who were able to be here. And there was other commotion happening as well—a furnace repairman, I believe, coming in and out. We'll plan on sharing them next week and not the following week, hoping for at least one evening of clear weather. Barbara will have reprints of last year's Christmas stories available for you next week as well.

I would welcome your questions after the break about what I've just spoken of or any other questions. As you have your tea and talk to one another, keep one level of awareness alert to the opening and closing of energy. Somebody jostles your arm a bit. Does your energy close? What allows it to reopen? If you overhear somebody saying something you don't like, how does that affect your energy? When you smile at another, how does that affect your energy and their energy? Bring as much awareness to this as you can, even now while you have your break. That is all.

I am telling Barbara that, perhaps not next week, but the week after I do want to take this one step further and tie it into the light body work that we've been doing. That is all.

Questions and Answers

Q: I'm wondering about one's ability to move within one's own boundaries regardless of others' boundaries.

Barbara: Aaron is asking, to move within one's own boundaries or to move outside of one's own boundaries?

Q: Outside.

Barbara: To move outside of your own boundaries regardless of others' boundaries? (Yes.)

Barbara: *(She begins by drawing a picture of energy fields of two beings interacting and explaining the ways the energy fields are affected.)* We are always free to move anywhere but within that space which violates the boundaries another has set. We may never intrude upon another's boundaries without karmic consequences.

Q: What if another is suffering but doesn't want to let us in?

Barbara: That's their choice, BUT you need to keep offering. This ties in with Aaron's statement that not to act also has karmic repercussions. We're responsible both for our intrusions and our inaction. Aaron will talk.

Aaron: I am Aaron. That space within another's boundaries is perhaps only one one-hundredth of one percent of all the possible space, but it's the space to which you're

most attracted. There's something in you that, as soon as you see a wall up, you want to go behind it. When you try to force your way behind it, you feel rejected. When you can see the other person's defendedness and it doesn't create a threat to you—when it doesn't say "rejection" and thereby pull you back into your boundaries, but simply says, "This person is defended; this person is feeling fear," and your heart stays open to that person's pain—it allows your energy to be available but not forcing. The other person, feeling this gift of energy being offered to it, but not feeling threatened by "You've got to open!" is often able to open.

This is how you may use your energy as a weapon, or choose not to when you become aware of how painful it may be to the other person to feel that thrust from you. You may not violate another person's free will decision to maintain their own boundaries. You may offer an invitation, a sense of joy at allowing that inter-connectedness. When the invitation is issued with joy and love, the one who has established boundaries sees it as an invitation to joy and love. When it's issued with a sense of fear, "I'm being rejected; I must force my way in and be accepted," or "I must *fix* this person; his/her pain is too much to bear ..." the other person receives it that way and it makes them withdraw further.

We speak about harmlessness. Harmfulness does not only mean pushing your fist or your angry voice into another's energy field, but pushing your fear of rejection or your discomfort with their pain into another's energy field. That is also a violation of them.

You begin to refine your understanding of this, to see how every action provokes a reaction and to have deeper reason to look at this sense of rejection you're feeling, to ask yourself, "Am I really being rejected? What's really happening here? Am I rejected and need to prove myself by pushing my way in, or is it just this person's fear? Can I embrace their fear without forcing myself on them?"

Similarly, seeing the desire to fix, not just to offer aid but real, intense *need* to fix, you may ask, whose pain is it that I so fear? Is his/her pain or fear which I want to fix an uncomfortable mirror of my own pain and fear? You find you do not need to intrude upon their space.

This asking, "Am I really rejected? What is this rejection? Who is being rejected?" works in two ways: you begin to understand that you're not rejected, that you've never been rejected, and that helps you to keep your own boundaries down. It also allows you to move past this duality of rejected/accepted. The entire notion of rejection is seen as a product of old mind and it falls away.

One of you is asking, is it ever appropriate to put up boundaries? This leads me into the whole question of co-dependence. I would like to save that either for the meeting in two weeks—I said that next week we will largely tell Christmas stories and also talk about your experiences with this closer watching of the opening and closing of the different energy fields. In January, I would like to focus on more specific questions into which this foundation I've laid tonight may lead us ... the ways you use your sexuality, the co-dependent patterns you get into, and how these work with the energy field, how you may become more attuned to the energy field as a tool to understanding the motivations for moving into co-dependent relationships or moving into unhealthy sexuality—by which term I mean sexuality that is a product of fear and not of loving connection.

Does that answer your question? That is all.

(A question that was put aside last week from last week: Words on the subject of friendship would be greatly appreciated.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. I want to talk about two aspects of friendship here. The search for friendship comes from two places within you: that which is motivated to reach out, to touch and to be touched, to blend energy because it's such a joyful experience, and the part of you that is trying to escape your aloneness and grasping at being understood, being touched—by which I do not necessarily mean physical touching.

For the most part, your friends are beings you have known many, many times before. I don't mean acquaintances here, I mean those people that you meet and, at first meeting, it feels like you've always known one another. There's a deep opening of the heart. You need not even recognize that there's been a past life connection.

One of Barbara's close friends is a person who when they met, perhaps twenty years ago at a party, they sat down and talked nonstop for four or five hours. Everybody else in the room ceased to exist. They had always known one another. They don't see one another very often—maybe twice a year—although they both live here in Ann Arbor. But they're both busy with their lives. When they meet they don't talk about what they're doing, they talk at a very deep heart and soul level. They really understand one another. Their paths differ a bit, but they have deep respect for one another's paths.

What's happening here is that the emotional, mental and spiritual bodies are fully blended. There is a sense, "Through many lifetimes I have come to trust this being's energy so completely that I have absolutely no need to build any walls." It is a deep joy to find those people. Sometimes the blending is on all four levels, sometimes on two or three, rarely on only one.

Because the trust has already been established, you don't move to that defendedness which is usual habit for the human. Assuming that both beings remain trustworthy in this incarnation, you stay open to one another and, for the most part, even if one of those beings is somewhat irresponsible and untrustworthy in some situations in its life, it remains trustworthy to this friend because that is such an old habit. Untrustworthiness is a kind of defense; when the energy fields are this open, no defense is needed.

The practice of this kind of friendship is an invaluable help in that it reminds you of who you truly are. This kind of friendship is not always possible with the one who is your life partner. It is very joyful when it is, but many of you are working out heavy karmic situations with your immediate partners. You may find friendship and a closeness to that partner, but there may be much more defendedness than you experience with certain friends.

This confuses many of you who come to me and say, "Shouldn't I be that totally open with this one who is my partner or spouse?" It would be lovely, but perhaps what you are learning really prohibits that level of friendship with that person. Perhaps, eventually, you will move into that level of friendship after the work is done. Perhaps not.

Those people who are your closest friends seem to be those who offer support, nourishment and encouragement to you, rather than the catalyst to deepen your learning. With the partner there is more likely to be catalyst for learning. Sometimes

those catalysts are very painful so that you ask, "Why am I with this partner?" Well, if there's not some balance, if there's only pain and no friendship, then I would reecho that question, "Why are you with that partner?" But often those who are the deepest friends really don't offer any catalyst. There's no adhering karma between you. There's nothing to be resolved. They are just a resting place, a mirror in which you may see your own soul. Yes, there is plenty of catalyst in the outside world; perhaps you don't need it in your home. But perhaps you do need that constant push to learn. Otherwise, why are you in that relationship?

Value these deepest friends. Love them. Know that it really matters not if you don't see them for ten years. The connection will always be there; you don't *need* to see them. Barbara has a dear friend in San Francisco who she visited this fall. She had not seen her for seventeen years. They'd had conversations to one another in their heads throughout these seventeen years. They came together after this time as if they had parted yesterday. There was no separation. And yet, if this being lived in Ann Arbor, it's very probable that they'd see each other very rarely.

A friend can be many things. Sometimes a friend does act as catalyst as well and there is a boundary that comes up when that catalyst pushes against you. That's another aspect of friendship. You are not as open to one another, but you serve one another. So I will not say a friend is only one with whom boundary is dissolved, nor only the one who offers catalyst for learning, but a friend is one who serves you, whether by nurturing or as catalyst, or as both. And a friend offers you the joy of being able to serve. That is all.

(Group sharing of experiences with last week's homework. F shares an experience of being behind a "bad" driver and watching his anger arise, asking "Who is angry?" seeing old mind come up in the form of feelings about his father and wanting to be correct and righteous, and with this realization, returning to equanimity.)

D: Aaron has been asking us for some time to ask this question, "Who is angry?" or "Who is ... ?" whatever. And I have been doing that and it seems like the answer is "I am feeling angry," by which I mean the emotions I experience, the memories I have are all part of what I am. They are not all what I am, but they seem to be an important part that deserves attention. I think I am misunderstanding Aaron in that I interpret his suggestion that we ask "Who is ... ?" as if I should get rid of this relative self.

Barbara: We're not disassociating from that aspect of ourselves that's angry, but we're making it clear that this part of ourselves that's fully connected to ... let's say the part of ourselves that's the perfect piece of paper, the pure awareness aspect of ourselves, that that part isn't angry ... that what's angry is different old mind aspects that felt threatened.

For example, when I first felt my shoulder hurting, the first thing I did was to feel the strong contraction and sense of fear and anger, "Why did this happen?" It wasn't that painful, but it hurt. I knew I had injured it; I dislocated my shoulder fifteen years ago and it was very, very painful; this felt very much the same but not as severe. So there was immediate tension, fear and anger. When I asked that, "Who is angry?" and "Who is frightened?," I could see that it wasn't me now in this moment. Now there was just me feeling some pain and discomfort and projecting into the future asking what's going to happen to it. But "who" was angry was the self of fifteen years ago and even beyond

that, the child who fell off a bike or out of a tree or whatever and the parent, instead of hugging it, would say, "Well, you shouldn't have been in the tree." The child who didn't get the love it felt it wanted when it injured itself. That's "who" was angry.

I don't need to disassociate that part of myself, but I need to be very clear how the anger is coming up out of old mind and how the fear is, and that in this moment there's really not any anger or fear. There's just the memories of that old anger or fear, and its reverberations in the present body. When I get that very clearly, for me the experience is that I'm not getting rid of the anger or disowning the part that's angry, it just dissolves because it's not present.

When I come back to this moment, there's just pure awareness seeing the whole process by which anger and fear arose conditioned by old circumstances and by habit ... that that's a pattern that I've used over and over again of feeling anger at pain, using that anger to escape my fear because I felt my needs were not going to be met in terms of being adequately comforted and protected from my pain ... and that I don't need to do that anymore. That frees me to just send loving energy to the shoulder and not get into a war with it? Can you see that? (Yes.)

For me that's what the "Who is feeling ... ?" question means. For those of you who have not tried this, I would very much encourage your trying it, both of these questions: Where did it come from? Who was feeling it? You can do it with joy as well. It doesn't diminish the joy; it brings it more fully into the moment.

Meditation

(It has been noted by the group that this is World AIDS Awareness Day. We honor this day with a special meditation. The group offers names of friends and loved ones they would especially like remembered or offered light.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. I doubt if there is any of you who have not known someone whose life has been deeply touched by this illness, either one who has become sick, him/herself, or one who is family or friend to such a one.

AIDS knows no boundaries of nationality, poverty or wealth, race or religion. It has brought those of you with deeper sensitivity and awareness together throughout the world as little else has, because those of you with a deepened sensitivity cannot say, "It's their suffering." You understand that it's all of our suffering.

The suffering comes not only from the physical illness of the being who is HIV+ or who dies of AIDS, but from the misunderstandings, the ways beings have been tormented, sometimes by their loved ones, for having developed this condition. They've become this century's "untouchables." Those of you who have transcended that sense of untouchability have truly learned to open your hearts and understand, "This is not somebody else's situation, this belongs to all of us. It is all of our pain and all of our healing."

May all beings who have learned to open their hearts to their brothers and their sisters with AIDS learn to keep their hearts open to all suffering ... (pause) ...

To all those who have died of AIDS, may we who still walk the Earth thank you for the gift of deepening our awareness and sensitivity and opening our hearts ... (pause) ...

Worldwide, may our energy be used in such a way that a cure may be found, that healing may be found ... May we retain the sensitivity we have developed, no longer needing the catalyst of the disease to urge us to that sensitivity ... (pause) ...

In your ways, I would ask you each to send whatever loving energy and support you can to those beings whose names were mentioned and to all beings everywhere in the world who are either suffering from AIDS or have a loved one who is so suffering. May the strength of our connected hearts help each being find the healing he or she seeks ... (long pause) ...

May all beings everywhere find freedom from suffering ... *(Bell.)*

May all beings find the healing for which they took birth, and in so doing, may they continue also to lead loved ones into deeper healing ... *(Bell.)*

May all beings find perfect peace ... *(Bell.)*

Wednesday, December 8, 1993

Aaron's talk

Good evening and my love to you all. I am Aaron. I am going to ask Barbara to soften her voice here. She is straining it because she feels the hoarseness which quiets it. I would ask that if those of you sitting in the back cannot hear, please raise your hand and someone close to Barbara will tap her knee.

Every year I share Christmas stories. For those who have not heard these before, I want to make a few opening remarks. First, I was alive—not as Aaron but that incarnation whom I was at that time—at the time that the one you know as Jesus walked the Earth. I had the great blessing to know this man. The one who I was was a simple shepherd. I was not learned nor was I a leading disciple of his, just one who loved him and followed him. I tell these stories not as I, Aaron, interpreting with a deeper wisdom, but the way they were experienced by that shepherd.

I also want to emphasize that I do not consider myself to be a member of any specific religion. I have much love for this one, Jesus, much love for the one who was known as the Buddha, much love for many other teachers: Hindu, Sufi, Hebrew and of religious sects of which you never heard, teachers who taught from their heart.

When you scrape off the traditions and the specific ritual prayers, and seek the essence of most religions that have really touched the world, you find that they have far more in common than they have differences. Their commonalty always grows from the fact that they were heart teachings. They did not come from a man or woman who was trying to impress others, nor from one who was striving for power, riches or control, but always from one who was deeply moved by the suffering that was seen around that one ... always from one who strived to empty the small ego self and allow the God-self to speak through, to allow oneself to hear that divine wisdom and share it.

The Buddha did not call it "God's" wisdom but Dharma. It doesn't matter what you call it, whether the religion is non-theistic or theistic. There is still a recognition in all of these great religions that there is something greater than the small separate self, something of which we are all a part. There is an attempt to live one's life in harmony with that energy, by whatever name it is known.

Those who have followed such great teachers have built up churches and temples around those teachers, have built up whole systems of religious doctrine and belief which often have very little to do with the teacher himself. There is a beautiful medieval legend that I've heard told many times in different ways. The legend is that the one who was known as Jesus, looking down from the spirit plane, saw the fires of the Spanish Inquisition. He looked closer and finally moved into body form to see just what was going on.

Now remember this is a legend. I am not claiming it to be history, only it could have happened. What he saw brought tears to his eyes. He saw men with crosses in their hands lighting fires and burning people at stakes. He asked them, "Why do you do this? By whose will do you do this?" And they referred him to the one who was highest in the hierarchy of the church in that place. So he went to see that man. "Why do you do

this?" He was told, "To strengthen the church. For Jesus' sake we do this, to remove heresy from the church."

The legend has it that the one who was known as Jesus said, "I am Jesus and I bid you stop! I never taught hate. I never taught killing." The man to whom he spoke had the wisdom to be afraid. He knew at some level that this really was Jesus; and yet, he said to him, "If you go out and tell them to stop, we will have to burn you, too. We must control because people cannot control themselves. We cannot say 'Love one another' because they don't, so we have to force them."

The story has it that the one who was known as Jesus, when he heard this, began to weep. He wept so hard that it put out all the fires of the Inquisition and a new spirit began to dwell in the land.

Those of you who are members of any specific religious organization, I ask you, if the one who was the founder of your religion came to Earth today, would your church or temple welcome that one or would he or she be an heretic? What are we creating in the name of love? How are we dividing ourselves so that one religion fights against another in the name of righteousness? Perhaps we are coming to a time on your Earth where your labels do more harm than good. I do not mean that it is harmful to follow the disciplines and doctrines of a religion, but it is useful to ask yourself, why do I need to label myself? How does that label separate me and make me feel better than another? Am I part of the solution which pulls all beings together, or am I part of the situation which creates separation and enhances it?

As churches or religious structures grow, they tend to move into what might be called an esoteric or private kind of teaching for the initiated few. They create hierarchies. Some of you who are in Barbara's meditation class will remember last month she read to you from a "bootleg" book, a book that she is entitled to read because she has had the proper Tibetan Buddhist initiations, but which, without a high lama's approval, she is forbidden to read to you. It seemed appropriate to her to share this one page with the class. She trusted her own wisdom. But this an example of esoteric teaching.

At times there may be a reason for it. For example, what she was reading from relates to the Tibetan dzogchen teachings which lead one to find the space of pure mind and learn to rest in that space. In that space no karma is created. It is a space totally empty of self. One who is not sufficiently mature could distort and misuse those teachings to say, "I don't have to be responsible." So, with a sense of their own responsibility for presenting powerful teachings, those who wrote down the teachings requested that they not be offered to those who are not ready to hear them.

BUT, how can we determine readiness for another? I cannot judge you and what is in your heart, nor can you judge one another. Perhaps those very words are just what one might need to hear to shake something loose and have one suddenly begin to understand who one really is.

Some religious structures have created this hierarchy of esoteric versus exoteric teachings offered to the masses. Through this means they have controlled. This brings me in a round-about way, finally, to my Christmas stories. Each year I have spoken to you about some aspect of this man, Jesus, that most deeply touched my heart. Jesus did not offer exoteric versus esoteric teachings. He spoke very simply, if at all. Much of

his teaching was in deed and not in word. When he did speak people would hear his words at the level that they were ready to hear. The same words, but those who were able to take it deeper could do so. For those who took it on a very surface level, that's what they needed at that point.

Never did I hear him lecture. He did not teach by sitting down with people and telling them, "Now you should do this and this and this," and philosophizing about it. He simply acted. Perhaps He had infinite power, but he did not show off that power.

A very simple story to illustrate this: There was a time when the one who I was was walking with him and a group of people. We passed a field where there were sheep and there in the field was a sheep lying on the ground in pain, bleating, making the sounds a sheep makes when it is suffering. No caretaker was present. So he immediately went to look.

This was one who had the healing power of life and death in his hands. He looked at the sheep and it was obviously in great difficulty giving birth. There was a foot sticking out. He could have fixed it in a moment. He didn't do so. He knew that the one I was was a shepherd. He turned to me and said, "Can you help it?" And, of course, I did know what to do, was able to insert my hand and push back one leg, pull forth another leg, twist and turn that tiny body to correct birth position, and draw out the baby lamb. Just that. Nothing special. But I wondered as I did it, why did he ask me when he had such power?

He said nothing then. We dried off the lamb and put it back with its mother and went on our way. That evening he simply said to me, in response to my unasked question, "Always do things in the simplest way. Never show off your power to impress." Just that.

That is how he lived. One would not have known his power, except that he gave off a radiance of energy—this light body that we've been talking about, which is perfectly clear, radiated from Him. The emotional, mental and the physical bodies perfectly harmonized with the light body. Except for that radiance you would not have known that he was a great teacher. He did not ask people to bow to him or worship him in any way. He did not ask for special treatment. I have described to you in a past year how, when a roof was leaking, he climbed up there with us in the rain and fixed the roof. That transcript is available; I won't go into that story.

He was simple and direct; he taught by his actions. Once, when I was with him ... When I say "I" here, please understand this is not the "I" who currently addresses you, which is a discarnate energy, but that it's the "I" which was one manifestation of this energy incarnate on the Earth at that time—one slice of this energy that I am.

Once, when I was with him, we came to a town, a small town, with a market place where apparently a man whose children were starving had just stolen a loaf of bread and had been caught. Those who caught him—the man who owned the bread and some others, including the one who, let us say, upheld the laws in that place—they were debating what to do with him. The man whose loaf it was wanted him to have the traditional punishment, right there, to have his hand cut off. The man was weeping, "My children will starve." And they lectured to him, "You should have thought of that." But, of course, he had only stolen because his children were starving. The gathering crowd was of mixed, and vehement, sentiment.

This one whom you know as Jesus watched the scene for a few minutes then asked those with him, what food did we have,? We brought out vegetables, bread and other food. He said to the man whose loaf had been stolen, "Will you take this in payment?" They looked at us and said, "But you're a stranger and that will put you without food." He simply said, "Our needs will be met. Will you take this in payment?" "Yes." That was far more than had been stolen. And, of course, the stolen loaf would be returned. Then Jesus said, "No, will you take this in payment and give him the stolen loaf?" Again, "Yes."

Then the bread man asked, "What will you and your group do for food?" Jesus simply said, "Our needs will be met." At which point, five or six people, strangers to us, each approached and invited us, "Will you come to our house to eat?" They started vying with each other, each trying to outdo the other for the privilege of hosting this radiant and generous stranger, until Jesus said to them, "Will you bring your food together and we will all eat together?"

This was not a rich village, but so much had been hoarded out of fear. Suddenly, people were eager to give and they began to open what they had hoarded and bring it out. People who had not contributed because they had nothing to contribute stood at the edge of the circle until the one known as Jesus invited them, "Sit and eat. Have faith. There will be enough food." And, of course, there was.

It was not through a miracle that he created plenty, although yes, he did do that at some other times and for his good reasons. In this place the lesson was different. Open your hearts and trust! The food was there. It had always been there. He simply asked those who were wealthy to open their hearts and share. But he did not do that by shaming them or lecturing to them, but by opening their hearts with his love, then allowing their open hearts to open their eyes to others' needs. A very natural flow. There was no judgment in it, no "you should give."

When we came back through that village again many months later, there was no longer any starvation. People had found adequate work and adequate food so that everybody there was fed. So, it was not just the passing moment, but it continued, because those who had been afraid learned to release their fear.

A similar story occurred with people who were fishermen. I came to a place with him once where somehow the nets had gotten tangled so that one group had far more fish than it needed, and another group had no fish and had lost its nets. The nets were marked; the group with the fish returned the nets, but they were empty. It was clear to all what had happened, but their greed and their fear made them cling to that which they felt fortune had sent their way. "Never mind your hunger." and "Aren't we lucky, we've got all these fish?"

This was not a culture where people took fish to market and sold them. There were only so many fish they could use. Yes, they could salt and preserve them. But they were closing their hearts to the others' hunger.

It was a very similar situation really handled in a similar way. He didn't lecture. He only said, "I see that you have many fish to eat. We have vegetables and bread. Shall we eat together?" And he pulled out such abundance that they said, "Yes." To those who

had lost their fish he said quietly, "Wait. Be patient." There were some among that group who knew and trusted him. But there was still anger and fear on both sides.

We sat down to eat. Those who had lost their fish stood behind at some distance. One of the other group made as if to chase them off but Jesus said, "They do no harm." Those with the many fish began to eat, but none of us did. We just sat with our plates in front of us, following his lead. They ate. They ate of their fish. They ate of our vegetables and our bread and our fruit. They looked up and said, "Why aren't you eating?" Jesus simply said, "No hurry."

How much can a man eat when he's surrounded by hungry people without finally becoming aware of his own greed and his own fear? A leader of them leaped up then and said, "You are taunting us!" And Jesus said, "No, it is your own fear that is taunting you." Just that. And that one understood. He looked around, saw all the food and said to the others, "I am sorry. Will you eat with us?" And of course, again, there was plenty.

I'm not suggesting we could not have had more to eat, but it was adequate and all were fed. More important, those who had taken what didn't belong to them were offered the non-judgmental opportunity to look at the roots of their own fear and greed and to allow the natural outspringing of love and generosity. This did not happen because they were lectured into it with some moral doctrine, but because they were offered the opportunity to find that love and generosity in their own hearts. This was his way: to connect each person with their own special beauty, with their own divinity.

He did not talk about prayer. He meditated in silence at times and he prayed with words, but rarely did I see him lead an organized prayer or ritual. Yes, he at times went to a temple where he participated in such ritual prayer because that's what was happening there, but he understood that prayer must come from your heart and that to recite words by rote closes the heart. It allows one to think one is "religious," "moral," "prayerful," and to think one is thereby better than another who is not. It doesn't connect the heart to God.

There was a time when he was recognized in a temple with some disdain by the hierarchy of that temple for they felt he would disrupt their service. When I say the hierarchy, not the rabbi so much as the more wealthy members of that group who felt uncomfortably challenged by his teaching. It was permitted for people to stand and speak in such a temple. They asked him, "How do you pray?" And they handed him a prayer book. He put the book aside, stood with head bowed, and simply was silent. After a few minutes they asked him, "Are you going to pray?" He looked up and said, "Yes, I am praying."

It was accepted practice that one not interrupt the one leading the prayer. They waited a few minutes more and said, "Are you going to lead us in prayer?" He said, "I am leading you in prayer." And again he was silent. Finally, some of them began to catch on. So, they stood there in silence for five or ten minutes and he uttered the proper closing to the prayer—the equivalent of "Amen"—thanked them and left.

I do not know how many times he did that. I was with him that once. I'm sure he did it repeatedly. He challenged people by being where they were not throwing ideas at them, just "I am praying." He didn't even say "Why do we need words?" just "I am praying."

Always, his heart was filled with love. I think he was able to teach as he did and not lecture because there was no lecture in him. His heart was so deeply filled with compassion, so totally free of judgment that he simply shared where and what he was with those around him, meeting each being exactly where that being was.

If one who was well educated came to him and wanted to talk ideas, philosophy, he could do that. He would indulge in that intellectual banter for some time and then ask a very simple question like, "Well, where is this taking us? Is this entertaining you? What are you after? To see if you can dissuade me from my philosophy?" And such a one would see that there was no such thing as "dissuasion" because he had not come to his philosophy through an intellectual path, but by a deep inward knowing. The power of his inner knowing would shatter the intellectual games of the other and bring him to that same place of purity in his own heart.

He would often choose to sit with the one who was very simple and lacking understanding. I saw him with such a one once, a teenage boy. (*Some words are lost as tape is turned.*) ... He was walking with a mule which had a burden that was too heavy for it and it was staggering. The youth was hitting it with a stick. No lecture. He simply walked up to him and said, "Your beast seems to be having difficulty. Are you going to town?" "Yeah." "Let us help you." And he picked up all the bundles and distributed them so that the mule had nothing left to carry.

We all got into a line, carrying the various parcels. The young man watched with some distrust. The one who was Jesus took his parcel after a few steps and handed it to another and turned back to the mule, gently took that animal and, with his arm around it, helped it to walk. And thus, we went into town. And there he washed the beast's cuts, saw that it was fed, all the while speaking to this young man with loving friendship, inquiring about his work. Where was he going? What was his name? Who was his family? What did he enjoy to do? No lecture.

We left the young man with all his parcels together, his mule comfortably fed and bedded, and a much deeper understanding of love. It came not through being lectured about love, but through being loved. Just that. Love one another. Don't talk about it. **Do it!**

I feel deeply blessed that such a one was my teacher.

May I challenge you a bit before I stop? The next time you are tempted to lecture another—"You didn't wash the dishes," "You are always late," "Why are you so impatient?" ... to a boss, to an employee, to a spouse, to a child, to a friend—stop yourself and ask some questions. "If I am trying to teach them by saying, 'You didn't wash the dishes' or 'You are always late,' is there a more effective way? Where does the voice of correction come from, a space of loving service or a space of fear that their lack will hurt me?" I'm not suggesting you become doormats for others, but can you be more fully to others what you wish they would be to you? Think about it.

We will end here to give you time for your break. I will be glad to answer questions. I thank you for your attention. That is all.

Barbara: Last week Aaron was talking about the energy fields of the physical, emotional, mental and spirit bodies. He asked us during the break to be aware: when did we move into a defendedness and closing of those bodies? What opened those

bodies? He would like you to be aware of the same thing during the break tonight and would like a chance for you all to share experiences with that, both what you experienced during the break and also, if any of you worked with it during the week, what you experienced. Were you able to see the differences in the closing and opening of these different bodies at all? So, for those of you who didn't do much with it during the week, especially watch it during the break.

(Break.)

Questions

(Barbara begins by reading pages 5 and 6 of last week's transcript. Long group sharing of experiences working with awareness of defendedness on the different levels mentioned above. Not transcribed.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. I thank all of you who have been committing yourselves so deeply to this work. I thank those who have shared and offered your insights to the others.

Mindfulness is basic. When you move to defendedness, **know** that you are moving to defendedness. Just give it a label: "defended." For those of you who are new to this work, do just that much. And then you might toss in the questions: "Who is defended?" "Me. I am." "Who am I?" Is this aspect of me that's defended, the person in this situation **right now**, or is it old mind? Is it all the past conditioning that's creating this defendedness rather than the reality of the situation?

For those of you who are able to work with it in that way, take it this step further than we went into last week: What level are you defended upon? See if you can feel the differences? It will not be an absolute, this aspect is shut down, that aspect is open. There are gradations. But is it mostly an emotional defendedness? Are you creating a spiritual separation? Is it a physical defense? And then, as F described, how can you work with it? In what ways can you reopen then, seeing where the anger is arising from, seeing the ways it is casting you off into a sense of separation? Are you choosing aloneness? Why?

Finally, I would ask you to experiment with this and take it one step further. Last week we were talking about the physical, emotional, mental and spirit energy bodies—You know I'm ambivalent about the use of the term "bodies" here. We have so many thousands of "bodies" we're batting around in this room, it is a bit confusing. But I am trying to stay with prevalent terminology which you might have heard in other spiritual groups.

So, these energy aspects of you ... Remember that there is a light plane template of the emotional energy body and then there is the relative reality manifestation which reflects that template. There is a light plane template of the physical body and the physical manifestation of it, the physical energy field on the Earth plane. And so on.

Where I hope you can take that thought is this: when you feel yourself becoming defended on the physical or emotional level, know that those specific levels are becoming defended and see how they lead to defendedness and separation on the spirit level too. Watch the arising of a strong sense of self and other. The spirit separation does not just appear. It grows out of the arising defendedness on other levels.

Seeing that, simply ask yourself the question, "Can I reopen just on the spirit level and come back into connection with that of the divine in this other being? Can I return to the place where we meet, that center where, when I'm there and he or she is there, we're in the same place? Can I allow myself to be vulnerable enough to do that?"

That allowing vulnerability is part of what P was just talking about. It takes much courage. But when you allow that vulnerability, there's such an opening of the heart. You still may choose to maintain a separation, to maintain boundaries, on the physical or emotional level. If that feels skillful, it is fine. But you don't have to shut the other out of your heart anymore. You simply maintain a skillful boundary.

Watch that this week, especially when you feel your heart closing to another. Ask yourself, "Instead of needing to close my heart entirely, can I close off only that part of me which really needs to be defended here—not old mind, **here** in this situation—and stay connected on the spirit plane to this person? Can I really hear their fear ..." as D remarked he was able to hear his co-worker's fear, really staying open, which can allow for so much difference in your response to the other. Difference, also, in your response to yourself, your sense of compassion for yourself and letting go of judgment of yourself.

We will talk about this next week. I'd like to hear more from you and we'll begin to take it even further—more specific ideas of how to work with it.

I also want to re-emphasize the practice from two months ago because it so much ties in with this that we're practicing right now. This is the practice of resting in ultimate reality. When a thought arises, or an emotion, you simply note it as "thinking" or "feeling." You can be more specific if it's useful. You don't need to be. See that arising thought without owning the thought. You ask, "Where did it come from? Whose thought is it?"

When we talked about this two months ago, many of you found that when you asked those questions there was clarity about the old mind conditions which had given rise to the thought, that the arising was empty of self and did not need to be owned or fixated upon. With that clarity, the thought dissolved; there was a moment at least—or sometimes an extended period of time—of very pure mind, and a resting in that pure space of awareness, empty of self, until the next thought arose. The stabilization of this space of pure awareness is very important to the work you're doing now.

I'd like you all to work with this, watch the thoughts that arise. If there's a strong aversion or attachment, look at it and just ask, "Where did it arise from? Is it here in this moment or product of old mind?" As you see it's old mind, watch it dissolve. Then catch that moment of complete emptiness of self after it's dissolved. I want you to learn to identify that pure awareness in yourself and stabilize it.

We've promised a short guided meditation at the end. I ask your forgiveness. This is the first week this fall that we have no time for questions. My Christmas stories were rather long. I hope they were a pleasant interlude. That is all.

Meditation

Aaron: I am Aaron. There is much light in this room tonight. I'd like to do a very simple meditation, one we've done before. The left hand is receptive, the right hand gives. Feel the energy coming in from the person on your left ... Breathe in ... draw it into yourself ... There may be much love in it ... there may be some fear or pain in it ... likely some of each ...

Ask yourself to stay as open as you comfortably can ... Let that energy rest in the heart center ... and then with the exhalation consciously pass it through the right arm and hand to the person next you ... along with your own energy ...

What you have done here is to allow the energy to blend ... your left hand neighbor's and yours ... and you pass it on ... And then turn your attention back to the left hand ... you receive again ... This time more of a blending ...

It may help you to simply think about some of the faces ... it doesn't matter if they're precisely in order ... the faces around the room ... That energy is all flowing around the circle ... allow yourself to receive it ... to enjoy it ... and to pass it on and to empty yourself ... expanding outward ...

Expanding outward now ... I ask each of you to envision one person who is suffering ... Someone near or far away ... someone known to you personally or unknown, simply a face from the television news perhaps or the newspaper ...

Taking this powerful energy, send it to that being with the prayer, may you find an end to suffering ... Remember you are not fixing that person ... only offering them your love and your energy to help them find whatever healing they seek ...

(Long pause.)

May all beings everywhere find an end to suffering ... *(Bell.)*

May all beings learn to share their energy and love with another ... to come to one another with an open heart ... and experience the joy of their true connection ... *(Bell.)*

May all beings everywhere find perfect peace ... *(Bell.)*

(Some time of silence.)

I thank you for sharing yourselves with me tonight and for allowing me to be here with you. My love to each of you and wishes for a good night. That is all.

Wednesday, December 15, 1993

Aaron's talk

Good evening and my love to you all. I am Aaron. Through these past few months we have been working in a different direction from that of past years. After many years of emphasizing how to work skillfully and lovingly in this relative reality, we have been shifting our focus to putting the weight on the foot in ultimate reality. We are working with the light body. Coming to know the perfection of yourself. Learning to rest in that space of pure mind. I do not want to neglect the relative reality. What we're after is a balance of both. Tonight I am going to speak more to relative reality issues, in part in response to the questions of the past few weeks and in part in commemoration of the one who was known as Jesus, whose birth you celebrate next week.

Of course at any one time on the earth there are many different life philosophies, but certain ones are prevalent. Prevalent to the time of the one who was known as Jesus was the attitude of "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Not "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," but "Do unto others as they do unto you." The old testament, as it's called, of the Bible is filled with stories of killing, of this or that being being treated unjustly and fighting back. These were the old laws under which mankind had lived for a very long time. There was a time when those laws worked, because there was a sense of sacredness of life in peoples' hearts. I speak here of the prehistoric human. Do unto others as they do unto you was fine when there was mutual respect.

The one who you know as Ariel, the one who is my teacher, spoke here one day of the coming of fear and negativity into the earth plane. I have also spoken of this; transcripts are available and I will not repeat it at length. Simply put, humans began to relate to one another more from a space of fear than of reverence. When Ariel spoke of this he introduced the idea that such fear had begun because those who we may term the guardian angels of the earth loved that which they protected, but did not trust the wisdom of what they protected, so they sought to own it, to shelter it, to protect it from itself. In short, they developed an attitude of fear, which sought to prohibit negative energy from being present, because they wanted to protect.

What followed was like the parent who chases the bully out of his yard because he wants to protect his child, rather than trusting that the child can deal with the bully and will learn from it. Humans began to emulate this fear. You learned to fear for yourselves and your loved ones, and to more fully distinguish "me" and "mine" from "yours." With that distinction came the distortion of "Do unto others as they do unto you," because humans began to treat others not as themselves, but as "other than" and as a threat. Increasingly the spiral went downward into more and more distortion, fear and pain. Everywhere on earth beings were becoming further locked into this distortion.

Jesus is not the only great teacher who incarnated into the earth plane in those times. By universal terms when I say "those times," a thousands years is not a big distance. The one who earned the name of the Buddha incarnated. Other names whom you would not know. All over the earth. Since you are here in this culture, regardless of your

religious preferences, you are familiar with the story of Jesus and I simply use this one for example, but also because his message is very profound.

He came for one reason, to clarify this distortion. Of course he needed to incarnate into a time and place that was open to his teaching, where there were already others speaking the thoughts that he would teach. In a sense, he didn't say anything new. It was how he taught more than what he taught that influenced others, because he was what he taught. It was not simply his words, but his energy and his life that brought Light to the world.

But in another way it was new. Not new to a very select handful in his country, but to most beings it was new: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; treat each other with reverence; know the sacred in one another; when someone offends you, offer them kindness rather than hatred. These are powerful teachings. Above all else this one came to teach forgiveness. What does it mean to forgive? It is not just words said by rote, but a movement in the heart. Forgiveness is not an event, it is a process. We enter into it slowly. It is not a philosophy, but a way of living. A natural way of living that grows out of the increasingly open heart.

We have talked here much about opening your energy and feeling when it closes in defendedness. When you are defended you're apt to point a finger of blame at another. When you can see your own defendedness growing out of your own fear, and create enough space to have compassion for yourself and cease judging yourself for your fear, then as the defendedness dissolves, your heart opens to the other. You begin to see the other's fear, and to feel the other's pain not as his or her pain, but as our pain. Your hearts connect. In that place of connection the word forgiveness really becomes meaningless, because there's nothing left to forgive. Only two hearts that understand one another's pain. And beyond that, one heart that we all share. That is the end of this process.

But we're not at the end, we're at the beginning. Each of you has been hurt, many, many times in your lives. Many of you have learned to forgive much of what has happened to you. Each of you, everyone in this room, holds some places in their heart which have not yet opened. Some things which feel unforgivable. We come to those slowly, and that is why I say that forgiveness is a process. As a friend puts it, you don't begin with the hundred pound weights or you'll get a hernia, you start with the ten pound weights. Start with those smaller slights where it is more easy to open the heart.

When you do a forgiveness meditation with another, as we're going to do tonight, you hold that person's image before you. We have been working much with light and energy. While the words of the forgiveness meditation will be familiar, I want to introduce something new into it. When you hold that being before you, see if you can see his or her energy field. Can you feel your own energy field at all? We've been working with learning to experience our energy more deeply. As you hold that person before you, can you feel the defendedness, the barrier?

Bring someone into your mind now who has hurt you and let's try this. It does not need to be the heavy weight, a ten pound weight will do fine. Old mind; can you see the way that as soon as this person comes into your presence all the old stories come with it, and the barrier goes up? What happens to that barrier when you remind yourself, "This is old mind"? In this moment there is just this person and myself. He or she is not hurting

me now. Can I speak to this moment's person, not all the past stories of this person? Can I allow my heart to penetrate into this person and really see their fear and pain that led them to act in whatever way they did that hurt me? See if you can allow the barriers to dissolve, your heart to truly connect with this person.

See if you can see or feel the energy field. Do your energies approach one another like darts; sharp points prickling at one another? Or more like the receding ripples of a tossed stone, coming together, gently merging with one another. If your remembrance of the other is as projecting anger, know that at sometime in this other's life it has projected loving energy. Can you find that loving energy in the one that you hold before you? Maybe it has never reflected that side of itself to you, but somewhere that being has loved. As a child, perhaps, he or she loved its mother or father. Or its lover. Or its child. Find within the one you hold before you that part of him or her which can love, even if you never felt that love.

Some of you are thinking here of a parent from whom you did not feel love. I ask you to think of that parent as a young child. Think of your own grandparent, if you can, as mother or father to this parent of yours. As a baby, did this parent love its mother or father? Sometimes to picture your parent, or the one who has caused you pain, as a baby, softens the heart. You may begin to understand the ways that one was hurt, became bitter, and turned that bitterness onto you. This penetrative looking into another is the beginning of allowing the process of forgiveness to begin. Gently now, let this person go. We will re-invite him or her in as we do the meditation.

I just wanted you to experience that softening, even if it's only the least bit of softening. Just watch it, it will soften further as you allow it; as you are ready. So we are going to practice a forgiveness meditation here, and to watch very, very carefully as we do the meditation to see what happens to your energy field when you first call in another who has hurt you and you feel threatened with all the old mind stories. See what happens when you notice that it's old mind and bring yourself back into the present, just this moment. This one person who has hurt you in the past now stands harmless before you.

When we do a forgiveness meditation we begin with ourselves. Perhaps of all beings in the world to whom we may wish to offer forgiveness, the hardest one to forgive is yourself. Bring your own self into your heart and mind. Watch the energy. Is it hard to let yourself in? Are there a hundred old stories, old judgments? "This being is bad, unworthy, to blame for this or that, untrustworthy, irresponsible, imperfect." What are the stories of which you accuse yourself? Have you ever said "I love you" to yourself? How does that feel? I want you to try it. To yourself, say your name and then the words, "I love you. I accept you, and I love you." Can you see yourself as you would see another? Look deeply at yourself. What pain, what fear, has made you act at times in ways that were unskillful? If this were your best friend would you judge him or her? Or would you say, "I see your pain and I love you. It's okay, I love you"? Can you say it to yourself? I will be quiet for a few minutes. Will you offer yourself what seems appropriate.

Your name, spoken silently; I forgive you, I love you ...

Can you feel the defendedness dissolve a bit, the heart open?

He taught us to love one another, but to do so one must begin with oneself.

I forgive you, I love you ...

I will be silent while you practice.

Letting yourself move out of the center of your focus now, bring in one who has hurt you. The one you used a few minutes ago, or another.

When you are ready, say to this other, "You have hurt me through something you said or did, or even thought. You have hurt me, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It is hard for me to say I forgive you.

Just for experiment's sake can you say those words, and see how it feels? Say that person's name to yourself, "I forgive you. I may not yet be ready to say I love you, I can not yet love you who hurt me, but I can see the divine that lies within you and, also, the places of fear and pain in you which led you to hurt me.

"Like me, you have not yet learned to say I love you to yourself. I wish you love. I will try to allow my heart to open in forgiveness. I say the words, just to see where it takes my heart. I forgive you, and I wish you well." I will be quiet now; please work with this yourself for a few minutes.

When you are ready let that being move out of the center of your focus.

So this is what he came to teach, not precisely forgiveness, but a new way of being in the world undefended, with open heart, seeing not the evil in others, but the divine in others, and living as if everything in life were sacred, rather than as if it were your enemy. This is the same process in which you are still involved. You are learning to allow defendedness to fall away, to see penetratively into each other being and find the divine in that being, so that your own divinity and theirs are what hold you together. When you speak you will not speak from your small ego self, but from the heart, and it is One Heart that you all share. When you and another meet in the place of shared heart, the differences fall away, and defendedness can dissolve.

As you move through these coming weeks that celebrate Jesus' birth, regardless of whether or not you consider yourself Christian, look into your own heart and ask yourself this: "Jesus and many, many other teachers came to earth to teach the same thing: how we can best learn to love one another. Am I learning it? What prevents me from allowing myself to love? Can I look deeply at myself each time defendedness arises and repeatedly allow those barriers to dissolve, again and again to allow the heart to come back to connection?"

Without much shifting here may I ask if you will simply take hands of those who sit near you; it does not have to be a full circle. I want you only to sit in silence here for one minute and feel the connectedness of your energies, and then we will close. *(Pause.)* No barriers. *(Pause.)* Barbara is experiencing the sensation of feeling the pulse on the hands of the neighbors on her right and left. When she first took their hands the pulses were not at the same time and now they have come into synchronization. Some of the others of you may be feeling the same thing. One Heart.

(Silence; we sit for several minutes.) (Bell.)

Questions

Question: Please talk about different paths such as Bhakti, jhana and karma yoga.

Aaron: I am Aaron. Let me begin by saying that these are not three different paths which exclude the others. You all find some blend of them, but each of you has one which is most resonant to your own nature. Very briefly, by Bhakti (*phonetic spelling bock-t*) we mean devotional path. Jhana is a path of deep concentration, of samadhi (*phonetic spelling sa-ma-di*), as it is technically called. The word karma means action. Karma-yogi is an active path of work in the world.

One can follow a karma-yoga path, for example, not involve oneself in deeper concentrative, meditation practices, or in devotional meditation, and end up simply forgetting why you are working. One can lose oneself in devotional meditation, shut oneself off, safe from the suffering of the world, and not attend to that suffering nor the need to be responsible to that suffering. One can entrench oneself into a jhanic space, where one finds deep bliss and insight, and not connect with the world or with God. So, it's necessary to keep them in balance. Within that balance, you follow the thread that pulls you most strongly.

The devotional path, in its essence, is one of keeping the name of God in your heart at all times. Everything you do is offered to God, everything that moves through you, be it loving or fearful, you release to God. Everything that comes into you comes from God. It is a path that leads you to constantly remembering your own divinity. This path leads to nurturing that spark of divinity in yourself and coming to rest in that place of pure awareness, not from the analytic side but from a place of simply knowing who you are. It is a very joyful path. It is a path of surrender of the small ego self. And yet it is a path of empowerment of the greater self, which is the divine self. It moves your balance from the ego aspect to the divine aspect, and allows you to rest in that divine mind.

When you fully rest in that place, you know your intimate connection with all that is. This leads you into a path of Karma-yoga, not because you've chosen that path, but because there is nothing else you can do; you can not turn your back on another's suffering. When I am God and you are God, you can not turn your back on that of God within another. So you become active to alleviate the suffering in the world, because your devotion leads you there.

When you start with the Karma-yoga path, you may not be thinking of God, only thinking of the suffering you encounter. As you try to fix that suffering you learn how solidified this self is which is trying to fix that which is outside of itself. Slowly, this sense of self and other falls away and you begin to connect with the divine in all of it. The move into that Heart we all share leads to God and back to devotional meditation.

Jhanic states are those levels of awareness that may be accessed through deepening concentration. There are eight jhanic levels. Each one takes you deeper into absence of self. Ultimately, these jhanas are a dead end, but they do teach you deepening concentration. Then you take that concentration into a deeper kind of meditation which allows for the arising of insight. When you rest in the jhanic state, there is such complete absence of self that there is nobody experiencing this, and hence, learning does not take place in the same way. What is learned from practices of intense concentration is the ability to maintain that level of concentration as useful tool, and then apply that concentration in something such as Vipassana practice. One learns how to make the mind tool, not master.

As you move into the jhanas, first solidified self, and then time and space, seem to fall away, and you enter into a timeless, spaceless realm of being. But it's very hard to bring that back into your daily life. The danger of the jhanic path is that one becomes almost addicted to the bliss of those spaces, and turns one's back on the world. However, when it is used wisely, it can teach you the emptiness of self. To my perspective, it is then a useful tool brought back to the deepening of Vipassana meditation, allowing one to move into deeper wisdom. So I would associate the concentrative path with a wisdom path, although they are not synonymous.

You may begin this wisdom path with no devotional practice, practicing in isolation and with no thoughts of service to others. As insight and wisdom deepen you become more able to rest in a space of pure awareness, and that pure awareness can not help but to see the divinity of all that is. You may not call it God—God is not a term used in Buddhism, which is non-theistic—but it is sacred space, sacred energy, light. Call it what you will. One begins to know that one is servant to that light. One begins to see the emptiness of self and that there is and never has been self and other, and thus one is called out of one's isolation and into service in the world.

So these paths do all inter-relate. This is a capsule. If it interests you to explore it further I would be glad to speak at length about it as an opening talk one night. Beyond that, is this a sufficient answer to your immediate question? That is all.

Barbara: This is Barbara. I'm finding that they all inter-relate, that when I do devotional meditation and it connects me with God, it makes me much more aware of any tendencies to isolate myself from suffering. It makes me much more willing to joyfully go out and work in the world. Do other people experience it that way?

Also, jhana is not really wisdom path but Aaron says he is using them as related to one another. Our minds get into a lot of turmoil. We can use mind to "tame mind," as Aaron puts it, by seeing what arises and constantly being with our emotions, thinking about what's happening, or we can use wisdom to tame our minds. When I say that I mean that place that Aaron has talked about of pure awareness, knowing that's who we are and really understanding, in a very wise way, how we move into different emotions and thought patterns conditioned by past experience. As we start to see how everything arises in us because of old conditioned mind, we stop identifying with that, then that level of wisdom that really knows who we are tames the craziness of mind that we get into. I find that when that happens for me it's a very—the only term I can think of is a religious experience; it's a very deep experience of gratitude, of connection with God because, maybe I've been feeling turmoil inside and then wisdom gives me a different perspective on that turmoil. It makes so much space and in that space I feel light. It brings me back to devotional meditation and God. It all flows for me.

Are there others who would like to share their experiences or thoughts about it?

Response from someone: I think Aaron's teaching integrates these very well, so that most of us haven't encountered these usual separations. He's always talking about balance; he gives us each different focuses, depending on our nature, but doesn't let us ignore the others. (*General agreement.*)

Question: How do you deal with doubt? I am working with intelligent people who don't believe in Aaron's interpretation of reality, and often my own faith gets shaken.

Aaron: I am Aaron. I'm going to ask you what color this paper is. I see it as white light. Are you going to tell me it's green? But I see it as white light. I do not see colors as you do. I see the energy that arises from an object, I see with a different perspective. Can you understand that it is both white light and it is also green in color? But I don't have your eyes so I don't see green. When I tell you I see white light, does doubt about your own perception arise in you? You can verify what you see with your own experience. You know you see green paper, so doubt does not arise. You trust your physical senses.

You have other senses. It's much harder to trust them. When someone tells you that they experience reality in one way, it's because they are using one set of senses. If you experience reality in a different way, you are using a different set of senses. Hear them the same way you hear me say, "It's white light." You don't close your heart to me, you simply know that I see it with a different perspective. When these people challenge you, know that they see it with a different perspective. They are using only their physical senses. That's all they have been trained to use.

The question here was, how do I deal with doubt? This is one way. When doubt arises because somebody contradicts what you think you see and they affirm, "It can only be the way I see it," notice that doubt is arising and ask yourself to come back and verify your own experience. It is not either or, it's both. They are seeing with the eyes of relative reality. You have pierced the veil into ultimate reality, and you see it differently. That doesn't make you better, it just means that you have a broader vision at this place in your evolution. If somebody can only sing the scale from E to G and somebody else can sing one octave higher, are they better? They simply have trained their voice. You have trained your seeing. I think that when doubt arises for you, it is because the other's questioning is accompanied by a sense of finger pointing at you, that you are foolish or inadequate in some way. This arouses your own sense of self-judgment. Look carefully and see what's there. What is there that makes you close your heart to your own clear vision? If everybody in this room pointed at this paper and said, "I see white light too," would you say, "What's wrong with me, I see green?"

Several weeks ago a friend brought an optical illusion that was supposed to have a picture of Jesus within it. Some people looked and said, "Yes, I see it," others looked and said, "Where?" Even when the eyes and nose were pointed out, "Where? I don't see it." If everybody in the group said, "Well, I see it. What's wrong with you?" what would have happened? It's that "What's wrong with you?" that creates the doubt. A sense, "I am bad because I don't see it as the others see it." A sense of fear, perhaps, of contradicting another. I ask you, then, to remember that this is not contradiction. We simply see it in different ways.

Do you know the story of the blind men and the elephant? Six blind men were led to an elephant. "What does an elephant look like?" they asked. One grabbed the tail and said, "Oh, it's long and skinny, like a snake." Another had a leg and said, "No, an elephant is like a big, thick tree." One had a tusk and said, "No, it's sharp, like a sword." One had the side and said, "No, it's like a wall." Another had the trunk and said, "No, it's moveable, flexible, and swings." And they were all right. When another says, "This can't be, you're being deluded, you're foolish," remember the elephant. What if four of them all had legs and they all agreed that an elephant is like a tree trunk and one had the tail and said, "No, it's like a thin snake"? It doesn't matter how many people see it differently than you.

What is there that prevents you from trusting your own judgment? You can not force another to see it your way; give them space to see it their own way. But look carefully, what is the threat about? What is there in yourself, you might ask, which wants to be right? What is so afraid of being wrong that you shift yourself out of your clear knowing, that you hold the tail and say, "Yes, it's like a tree trunk"—even though you're holding the tail!

I think that as you watch the process of moving into doubt in yourself and see the old mind conditioning behind that doubt, see all the needs to be right, to control, to be safe, the doubt will fall away of its own accord. You don't have to work to get rid of doubt. What you do is re-allow trust; come back to the place inside you, over and over and over again, where that small seed of faith lies, and nurture that seed. Nurture it with the reminder, "We are both right. I am seeing it through my senses and he or she through his or her senses. I do not have to prove them wrong, nor do I have to feel threatened."

You might also notice here that part of the other's need to prove you wrong is related to their own fear. It is helpful when you can see another's fear, not for purposes of judging the other, but just to empathize with their fear. What you are asking them to believe is very threatening. Many do not want to believe in anything beyond what their physical sense can tell them, because there is a sense of loss of control. This is not to breed superiority in you, only to open your heart in compassion to their fear and see why this person needs to convince you that you are foolish and he or she is right. His or her fear is okay, and your own deep faith and intuition in what you know to be true, not just from words but from your own experience, that is also okay.

This brings me to the last point. Faith has different levels: which are sometimes called preliminary faith, preliminary verified faith, and verified faith. You first may believe something just because somebody you trust tells you it's true. Barbara tells you that if you meditate your mind will deepen and quiet, and you will move into a space of knowing your deep connection with all that is, and that separation will fall away. "Sounds good," you say, "I'll try it." Before you've even tried it somebody asks you, "Why do you meditate?" you reply "Because it takes me to a place of non-separation." But this is based on hearsay. Once you begin to meditate and you have just one experience of deep connection, that's preliminary verified faith. "Ah-ha! This is what she was talking about. It really is true, there is no solid self here, I am interconnected with all that is." It inspires you to meditate more, and eventually that further practice leads you into spaces of deeper and deeper connection, where no one can shake you out, no one can say, "No, you're separate." Because your verified faith tells you from your direct experience, "I am not separate."

Now most you are in that place of preliminary verified faith, and it's fragile. As doubt arises it may help to remember the spiritual experiences you have had—not what others have told you, but your own experiences. Rest in those experiences and allow them to deepen and eventually your faith will become a rock solid foundation, and a beacon of light to those who have not yet found faith. It is here that you can begin to serve those who question you, not by convincing them, but because their accusations that you are foolish or stupid no longer sway you, nor lead you into fear. They can feel your calmness, the space that you give it all. That opens the door for them. They may then start to be able to say, "I see the change in her. Maybe there is something to what

she is saying." And they may begin on this path of preliminary unverified faith, just having heard it from you. In this way you hold the door open for others; you do not force them, but allow them to see in whatever way they need to see, knowing that their vision is also correct, just on a different plane.

We are almost out of time here. This week is Hanukah and some of you have asked if we could light this Menorah together and recite the prayers.

(We spend a short while explaining the meaning of Hanukah to those not familiar with it, and we light the candles, recite prayers. Several in the group sing a song in Hebrew.)

This Hanukah Menorah reminds me of a song that Barbara's family used to sing when she was a child. Barbara is unable to sing it in tune, so I will ask her merely to recite it. The song was called "Rock of Ages," and the second verse words were:

Children of the martyr race, whether free or fettered
Sound the echoes of your song, where ye may be scattered
Yours the message cheering, that the time is nearing
That will see all men free, tyrants disappearing

You are all approaching that time in which all men will be free. You are pioneers, forging that path to freedom. And I honor you for your courage in pioneering in this way.

My love to you all, and wishes for a happy holiday, whatever it is that you may be celebrating in the coming weeks. That is all.

(We close by singing Amazing Grace.)

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound,
That saved a soul like me;
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour when first I believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound,
That saved a soul like me;
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

Wednesday, January 5, 1994

(Twenty-five people were present, including six new to Aaron's teaching. There are some basic questions which are answered in more depth in the book Aaron.)

Aaron's talk

Good evening and my love to you all. I am Aaron. I welcome our new friends here tonight and, of course, am delighted to feel the energy of so many old friends. I hope that you have had a pleasant holiday season. Now it's time to get back to work! I hear much laughter as I say that. Some of you have found the holidays to be arduous work indeed, away from your daily schedules and with many new catalysts in your lives, having to deal with more constant demands on yourselves.

I want to offer a brief preface to our new friends here. I am a teacher. I am not perfect. I am not omniscient. I do not claim what I teach to be Truth with a capital "T." I only can teach what I understand from my own perspective. That's all I can offer you. My hope is that it will connect you with your own truth. So if it does that, if it rings true for you, take it into your heart and use it. If not, discard it.

We have spent the fall working with this balance of relative and ultimate reality. In relative reality, you wear this Earthsuit, you are human incarnate on Earth and play the role that you play, "being" somebody. To some degree, you **must** be somebody to survive on the Earth. You are constantly called upon to play different roles: child, parent, friend, lover, teacher, student. Your sense of who you are grows out of a combination of these roles. And yet, each of you knows that is not really who are. That is only one part of the totality of who you are.

If you deny these roles and say, "I am the angel, the spirit. I needn't push myself in any way to be a skillful child, parent, friend, teacher or student. That doesn't matter—I'm spirit."—if you do that, yes, you become more deeply aware of ultimate reality; **but**, it is a distortion of ultimate reality which denies the relative plane. The ultimate includes the relative; If you deny the relative, you then cut off from yourself those catalysts which are offered for your learning. You are here in incarnation for a purpose. This Earth is your schoolroom. If you disassociate from the roles that you play, how can you learn from them? How can you learn compassion, how can you learn forgiveness, how can you learn non-judgment, if you disassociate from all of the situations which open you to both judgment and non-judgment, blame and forgiveness? What does forgiveness mean when you have not allowed yourself to feel the pain and fear which distort themselves into blame?

How can you learn true compassion until you have opened to your rage and pain?

So, you are learning to find this balance in your life, to play the part you've been given as skillfully and lovingly as you can, but without attachment to it, knowing "This is just a part." What I speak of here is **stabilizing the ability to rest in ultimate reality without turning your back on relative reality**. One could almost say that once you have learned how to do that, you're through. It's just a matter of smoothing off the rough edges. The act of balancing really is the hardest part of it.

If we focus just on that balancing, it calls everything that you need into yourself. Awareness! In order to balance, you must be aware of when you are not balanced, when there is aversion to the relative reality that pushes it away, or such deep fear that you get caught in your role and forget who you truly are. So, balance grows from mindfulness.

At times, when the path is very dark, balance grows from faith because, when relative reality is closing in around you—a loved one ill, the roof leaking, a big bill needing to be paid, whatever it may be—those are the times that your fear closes in. You begin to fight with your life and with the situations in your life and so easily forget who you are, forget the angelness. At that point, you may not be able to really experience that angelness, that divinity. You may not be able to find that place of pure mind. This is when your memory of having been in that space of connectedness and harmony will carry you through. That and faith. Not blind faith, but faith in the truth of the memory. *"No matter how alone I feel now, how frightened, how in pain, I am connected to all that is. My meditation practice has opened my heart and eyes to that connection. Now, in my fear, I cannot feel that connection, but I have faith in the memory of it. That is real. I am not imagining it."* So, maintaining the balance necessitates mindfulness and faith.

Energy. Yes, a great deal of energy, but not only from within. So many of you come to me and say, "Aaron, I'm tired." You become the most tired when you get caught in being the SOMEBODY who is "doing" the spiritual work, being SOMEBODY who is serving, being SOMEBODY who has to be good. Then you're not feeling connected and the energy for all of that "doing" comes from a finite place. Your small self is limited. Your divine self is unlimited. Again, it takes mindfulness and faith to allow you to reconnect with that divine self, to stop doing so much and just allow yourself to **be**, and allow the energy of the universe to flow through you. When I say it takes energy, it's not a personal energy, but is allowing yourself to be the channel for infinite energy and love. Then there is no self "doing" and no self with its limits to become exhausted.

Concentration: the mind must become disciplined and asked to stay in the moment, as much as is possible.

Wisdom. This is the last one we need for the balance. All the prior strengths are factors in the deepening of wisdom. First there must be concentration and awareness. There must be the willingness to offer one's energy and to be an open channel for Divine energy. This entails a willingness to let go of the small ego self.

I spoke before of blind faith versus what we might call verified faith. Your physical senses can never tell you who you truly are and of your inter-connection with all that is. To cut through the delusion of separation you must use different senses which are best accessed in meditation. When you allow yourself to sit quietly and move into a meditative space, then you begin to know who you truly are. You may have a direct experience of "dissolution of self," as it is technically called. You may see, not with your eyes visually, but with your inner, third eye, the falling away of boundaries. Any who have experienced this—while you cannot put it in words like you might put in words the taste of an apple or the seeing of a rainbow—any who have experienced this have no doubt about their connection with all that is, nor about their own true nature.

You can go through much of your life mouthing the platitude, "We are all one," but it doesn't mean anything. Then, suddenly, one day in meditation all barriers dissolve. There are no words for this experience. All you can say is "We are all one," but you say it differently, forever. There is a new wisdom which truly understands your oneness and is increasingly able to live that understanding. To understand is insufficient. It must be internalized and lived!

That deepening wisdom cuts through the illusion of separation that imprisons you in relative reality. It opens the doorway to ultimate reality. The willingness to allow the fullness of relative reality enhances a sense of compassion. You balance between the two, and know, "I cannot separate myself because I am not separate. This is not **his** or **her** suffering, this is **our** suffering, and I must attend to it."

Then your desire, your aspiration, to alleviate suffering in the world ceases to be an "I should" judgmental kind of push and becomes a deeply loving way of connecting with the world, offering yourself as that channel for universal energy, light and love, sending it out where it's needed, and not being exhausted by the process because there's not a self doing it.

Here is where you find the balance, and here is where the illusion of self truly is dissolved. So my suggestion, my friends, is that we not focus on graduating from this plane, on enlightenment, or any of those other highly spoken aspirations, but just focus on this balance. Compassion and wisdom. Relative reality and ultimate reality. That is the balance that will bring you home. But only when you cease grasping at getting home and simply live your life with as much mindfulness as possible, moving toward living the balance.

The next question, obviously, is **how** do we live this balance? One of you just said to me, if I knew how to do it, Aaron, I already would have. Of course. Can you accept that everything in your life is offered to you to help you learn this balance? Constantly. The catalysts are offered which remind you to touch pain and fear with love, and simultaneously to trust that pain and not dwell in it, nor seek a place to lay blame.

I want to take this into something a bit more technical. Through the fall and early winter, we spoke at some length about the light body. We defined that body. We talked about the human manifestation as a reflection of the light body. In describing the light body I said that it is always perfect. But it picks up surface distortions. We used this example, which I ask Barbara to repeat for those who are new tonight.

We have a perfect smooth piece of paper. You might pretend it is unlined, if you would. It is what was available. The perfect white sheet of paper. (*Barbara crumples the paper and then opens it.*) Can you see the perfect white, unlined, unwrinkled piece of paper within the wrinkled sheet? That perfect piece of paper is still there.

Now, you bring along another piece of paper and say, "I'm going to mirror the first sheet." Which do you choose to mirror: the wrinkles or the smooth, unlined sheet? Because you do not see yourselves as this perfect sheet of paper but only the wrinkled one, what you manifest in the physical body is a reflection of the wrinkled sheet rather than the unwrinkled sheet. I do not want to repeat too much here, but a small amount of repetition is useful to those of you who have heard this before.

If we took a perfect clear light and shined it through a transparent sheet of paper onto a solid surface, the reflection of light on the solid surface would be unmarred. If you wrinkled that transparency and shined the same perfect light through it, brilliant light, those wrinkles would show up as shadows on the solid surface. I want you to begin to think of your anger, greed, jealousy, pride, fear as wrinkles. Using this metaphor, you can see that you do not need to get rid of the wrinkles in that transparency. Instead of focus on the wrinkles, can there be focus on the inherent perfection of the Light itself? When the brilliant light shines through the wrinkles of the transparency and you have the shadow of wrinkles on the solid surface—the physical incarnation—you can look at those wrinkles, at those shadows, and know “This is not who I am.” Rather than identifying with and, in a sense, owning and living your life around those heavy emotions, you can come back to the brilliant clear light.

I speak of this cautiously—especially with those are new to my teaching—because what I have in mind is not denial of the heavy emotions, not disassociation with them and grasping at ultimate reality, but cutting through them. It’s not as simple as that. We have led up to this slowly, and I would hope that those of you who are interested in what I am saying and are new to it will follow through by reading some of last semester’s transcripts.

But, in another sense, it is that simple. As long as you are incarnate in a human body, at times there will be anger, greed, fear, jealousy and other emotions. The emotions are not the problem. Your **relationship** with them, which affects how you respond to them, is what is important. Anger arises; do you believe you own that anger and need to react to it, or can the arising of anger lead you deeper into your true self, your pure mind that is always clear of anger, fear and other shadow? Here (*Barbara holding the wrinkle in the paper.*) is the wrinkle in the transparency of anger; it comes down as a big shadow line of anger in the physical incarnation. If you hate that anger, that shadow, and constantly try to get rid of it, that’s just more hatred. When you develop compassion and use that shadow as a constant reminder—have compassion for the human that I am that sometimes gets stuck in anger—then you will no longer need to fling that anger at self or others.

This is not to say that anger is good or bad. It’s neither. It’s just anger. Anger is energy. What do you do with the anger? Do you claim it as **my** anger and practice the wrinkle which heightens the shadow, or do you simply note, “Here is anger, here is fear, here is greed,” whatever may be there, note how it arises empty of self, and come back to the brilliant light, to that place in yourself that is free of anger, free of fear.

Both are true. Yes, there’s anger, desire, jealousy. Yes, there’s perfect love. The wisdom mind stabilizes itself in that place of perfect love and total connection. The heart of compassion stabilizes itself in opening its heart to the human realities of heavy emotions and finds space for them all. And there you stand balanced.

My plan for this semester in many of my opening talks—of course, we will have some variety in what we will cover—but especially, I want to discuss this balance more and offer exercises for living the balance, stabilizing the resting in pure mind without denial of the relative reality forces and catalysts. As we allow ourselves to rest more in this space of pure mind and to know more firmly “This is who I am,” to rest in pure awareness, the body energy clarifies. You find that some of these wrinkles, both on the

physical plane—the physical distortions in your body—and the emotional and mental planes, can be resolved simply by ceasing practicing the wrinkles in the light body. So I want to help you become more and more aware of where you are practicing those wrinkles in the light body and how they are leading to physical and emotional distortions on the physical plane.

We do this not because the distortions are bad, but simply because you all wish to learn to manifest your energy more purely. You are not getting rid of distortions; you are allowing them to dissolve as you see there is no longer a need for them. You are really recognizing that aspect of you which has always been free of distortion and learning to rest there without any aversion to the distortions that do arise on the relative plane, only skillful non-ownership of them, skillful non-reactivity to them. You are not getting rid of anger or greed, nor the kink in your shoulder or your knee, but you are finding the place where those distortions are the product of old mind conditioning. As you rest in a deeper reality of who you are, the distortions simply are unnecessary. Then they may dissolve, or you may make so much space for them that their presence becomes irrelevant.

Later in the semester, we will take this a step further. I want to look more deeply at karma with you, to help you understand what creates unwholesome adhering karma. There are two different things we will consider. One is that I want you to experience how when you are resting in this place of pure mind awareness, no new karma is created. Now, I know you can't stay in that place, but with awareness you can rest in it for longer periods. This will also help you to see how new karma is created—not as an intellectual issue, but through your experience.

Then I also want you to begin to see how old karma can be released in much the same way as the physical and emotional distortions. This is an area where we will go slowly. It must be understood that you are always responsible for everything that has moved through you: every act, every word, every thought. So I'm not offering you a tool for irresponsibility, but a tool for becoming more responsible, for seeing when there is old karma that you've carried around like old baggage and of which you no longer have need. As you rest in your true nature, that old baggage is clearly seen for what it is and, through processes that I will teach you, it may be released.

It's hard work. I don't want to deceive you here. If you want to do this with me, you're going to have to work. But I promise you that you will also experience your own true light in a much more profound way and find great joy and peace in that Reality.

I'm going to stop here, give you your time for break and questions. I want to request time to do a meditation with light at the closing of this session. I thank you all for your attentiveness and for allowing me to share my thoughts with you. I would say one more thing here. The efforts of two of you have provided a constant flow of transcripts week by week. This has been very valuable so that those who have missed sessions, as is necessary for some of you at times, might catch up. If there are others who are able to do this transcribing and assist these two it would be of value. I would very much hope that we can continue to keep these transcripts current so that this work is more accessible to all.

Finally, before I stop for your break, perhaps not tonight but next week I do want to get back into the topic of dreams, dream interpretation, and work more toward this

process of lucid dreaming. If there are not many other questions tonight, I would welcome one dream that we can interpret and that we do this weekly in an ongoing way. Not a highly complex dream. I don't want to spend a half an hour on it, but five or ten minutes. My interpreting dreams for you helps you to understand the process better and learn how to do this more skillfully with your own dreams. Beginning to work with dreams in this way is an essential first step to the lucid dreamwork which I would like us to be doing further into the semester.

My love to you all. That is all.

Questions

(Barbara asks Aaron, what is the most skillful way to deal with the profusion of moths in the house?)

Aaron: I am Aaron. I hear your question. I don't want to limit the answer to moths. Occasionally your homes are invaded by small creatures that do damage. What if it were termites instead of moths? The moths aren't harming anything, except perhaps a little bit of food that they've moved into and made their home. I think that once you find the source of the food for them and discard it, the moths will leave. They have very short life spans.

But what do you do if you have termites that are truly damaging the house? What do you do if you have some small insect that bites and can cause a welt or even disease?

Some of you may remember the story of the woman who was hoeing her garden and found she was cutting into earthworms (*Machaëlle Small Wright of Perelandra*). She didn't want to hurt the earthworms. She announced to them, "I am going in to get a cup of tea. When I come back out I'm going to be working in this row. Please move." She relates how she came back out and started to hoe and there were no earthworms. She finished the row and with some wonder said out loud, "All right. Now I'm going to work in the next row. You can go back into the row I've just hoed." She waited a few minutes and began to hoe the next row. Part way through, out of curiosity, she went to the row she'd just finished and dug her hands in and it was filled with earthworms.

Don't ask me to explain it. You are given the gift of communication on levels far beyond what you would suppose you have. You have to believe in it. With termites, even with termites, tell them, "I do not want to get an exterminator and kill you all. I'm going to put this big old tree stump in such-and-such a place. Please go and live there."

What if half of them go and live there and half of them don't? You will have to make this decision. You do have a right to a home that is not being destroyed. You have given them a choice. You have stated clearly what you will need to do. This still does not absolve you of the fact that you're killing them. But there is a difference in that you have offered a choice. They have chosen to stay, knowing what the repercussions of that decision will be.

This may sound ludicrous to you, but I promise you, they are hearing you, if you say it clearly. You must give them an alternative. I would suggest the same alternative that we (*Barbara, Mike and Aaron discussed the mice in the pantry this week.*) decided on for the mice: put a bag of whatever they're living in now out in the garage and tell

them, "You can live there for the winter. Please stay out of the house. I am going to have to kill any moth that I see in the house." You have given them a choice.

One is asking, if I kill them what degree of karma does that create? You must understand karma here, **unwholesome** karma grows from a place of greed and selfishness, service to self. **Wholesome** karma grows from a space of service to all beings. We also have the subdivision of **adhering** and **non-adhering** karma. Even when there's wholesome karma done in service to all beings, if there's **somebody** doing it, you're creating adhering karma. It's wholesome but it still adheres. There's still a self involved in it.

Your work with these small creatures, as with anything else, gives you the opportunity to look at how much self there is. Who is trying to protect? Against an other? When you let down the boundaries between yourself and these creatures, it's very different.

Let me raise a question for some of you who have had this experience. If you go to sleep in your bedroom and you see a number of big insects—spiders or other things—on the wall, you want to get them out of there. My bedroom. Even in a tent you shoo all the small things out the door and zip it closed. But, have you ever gone to sleep out on the grass? As you're dozing off, you feel something small crawling over your hand and you don't pay much heed to it. You have dissolved some of the boundaries. There's nobody being defended.

These small creatures give you the opportunity to see where you are defended and drawing into self. When you respond from a place that is empty of self, but that must set certain reasonable limits such as "You may not destroy my house," there's a very different kind of karma created than when you go after these small creatures with rage and intent to harm because they are destroying your house or food or whatever. What is the rage about? I'm not suggesting you can kill something with love. That doesn't go together at all. But you can kill something without a strong sense of murderous raging self, with regret, let us say, and with a prayer for that small being as you kill it. Yes, you're still killing it, but there is a real difference. Eventually perhaps you will not need even to do that. It is a process of maturing. That is all.

Question: What dimensional perspective do I come from? Have I been a dolphin more times than human?

Aaron: I am Aaron. I say this to all of you. You come from a myriad of different backgrounds. Some have evolved fully through the Earth plane, some through other planes. It doesn't matter. Once you are here in human incarnation, you are human. Even those who might be very new humans, having evolved mostly on a non-material plane, once you are in a human incarnation, you are human.

All of you have had so many past lives as mineral and gas, as vegetable, as animal—or on the non-material planes as light beings of one sort or another. The one asking this question is correct that it has been dolphin in many, many lifetimes. It has seen that clearly. I'm not sure what use such knowledge is to you, but I offer that in answer. But don't forget that now you are human, and this is the catalyst that is offered for your growth. Can you let go of what you have been and more fully be what you are? That is all.

Question: I have found the forgiveness meditation helpful as the issue of forgiveness has come up very often. I think I'm getting the message. However, a part of me resists being forgiving. I just don't feel particularly forgiving about certain things that have happened in my life. I have understanding as to how certain things could occur the way they did and even feel compassion for the person. Perhaps I am being forgiving and don't realize it. However, there does seem to be a holding back. Is it possible to get more clarification as to what forgiving really is?

I also feel guilty about not being as forgiving as I might be. Will I incur a demotion in density or create several more painful lifetimes for myself? Will not being totally forgiving prevent me from knowing the true bliss of the self? I just finished reading Aaron's book, No Chain At All. Will inability to be totally forgiving prevent me from achieving steadiness in choiceless awareness?

Aaron: I am Aaron. My dear ones, forgiveness is a process, not an event. What if, in place of the word forgiveness, we substitute the word **love**? How much are you capable of? What does it mean to love completely with no holding back at all, to move totally beyond awareness of the small self so that one serves as a perfectly clear channel for love? Can you see how impossible that would be while in human form?

You are here in a body with emotions for a reason. You are not here to become perfect, but to learn to love your imperfections. I am not suggesting that you fling those imperfections on others, but that you learn to see the constriction of fear and respond to it with increasing skill. You learn you do not need to be ruled by that constriction and to allow yourselves to give as lovingly as you can despite the constriction. There is far more learning in that than if there were no constriction. Can you see that?

Think about it with the essence of generosity. Here are two individuals, A and B. They each have an apple. At B's feet is a big basket of apples. A has just the one. They're each about to bite into their apple when a small child appears before them with big eyes. Skinny. "I'm hungry. Can I have that?" B doesn't feel any fear at all. He just hands the apple to the child. What fear could there be? There's a whole basket of apples.

A feels a sense of fear, feels that constriction. "What if I give this? What am I going to eat? I'm also hungry." Perhaps A thinks, "I could divide it, but that child is awfully skinny." Regardless of how A resolves it, whether A gives the whole apple or cuts it in half, A has worked skillfully with fear, and been able to give despite the constriction of fear, been able to come back to its true self of connection, and to know "I cannot feed me when this one is hungry, nor can I simply feed this one when I am hungry. We're connected." A has learned that through its giving.

Has B really been generous? On one level one could say, "Yes, B gave." But what did the giving mean to B?

What does it mean to forgive completely? I do not suggest that this is impossible on the human plane in some situations, but no human is going to be able to forgive everything completely. You will make progress on it. You will enter into the practice of forgiveness more and more wholeheartedly and find the deep joy in that forgiveness. The more you find that joy, the easier the process of forgiving becomes. Don't be afraid of the place within you that says, "I can't forgive this yet." Rather, have compassion for that place of deep pain in yourself and know that, as you offer yourself compassion

and forgiveness for your own fear and holding, you are learning to offer that same compassion and forgiveness to that catalyst for that pain.

Compassion and forgiveness are intimately connected. You are not here just to learn forgiveness. Rather, the practice of forgiveness is part of the path to the learning of compassion. When you truly see into the depths of another, see how their fears arise and give impulse to words and acts, you will know such deep compassion to that being that there will be nothing left to forgive.

How hard you all are on yourselves when you demand perfection. The light beings that you are are perfect. The humans carry distortions. When you are angry at yourself for your inability to forgive completely, that is just practicing the wrinkle of anger. Instead, focus on the amount of forgiveness you are able to give. If you're forgiving 87%, focus on that and not the 13% that's still constricted. Rest in that divine self that is learning to forgive. Allow yourself increasingly to experience the joy of that forgiveness, and slowly the other 13% will come along. If it doesn't come along, just give it a hug and be patient with it. And keep practicing, starting with yourself: Can I forgive that in me that finds forgiveness of others who have hurt me so difficult? Does that sufficiently answer this question? That is all.

Question: There are many methods for meditation. Which one do you recommend most?

Aaron: I am Aaron. I recommend a balance of two different practices, the balance depending upon each individual. There is a practice called Vipassana meditation which grows out of Buddhist teaching. I do not recommend this with a purpose of becoming a Buddhist, although should you choose that label and path, that is fine. This transcends any religion. The word "passana" means "seeing." "Vipassana" means "clearer, deeper seeing."

This is a meditation practice which takes one into the clear seeing in this moment of what is present in the mind-body-spirit experience and allows one to make space for that which is present. Ultimately, it allows one to come to know one's true nature, empty of a separate self.

To balance what may at times seem the ... "intellectual" is not quite the right word. "Cognitive" is also not the correct word. One moment, please, while I speak with Barbara.

At times this practice can move one into the intellectual, and away from the heart. That is not the heart of the practice, but it can be distorted in that way. As balance to that distortion, I would recommend devotional meditation. This can be devotional meditation with that which is often called God, or if God, in that term, is not real for one, simply devotional meditation with devotion offered to beloved teachers, to the life force itself, to that infinite intelligence and compassion and loving-kindness which is the heart of the universe, or to Truth as one most clearly understands it. One opens one's heart in wonder and gratitude to that central force of love. That process helps bring the heart in as balance to the mind.

Each of these kinds of practice can be done in many ways. There is a specific method that we teach here, but most basic Buddhist practice will teach you some system related to Vipassana meditation. Much basic Judeo-Christian practice will teach you

something related to devotional meditation. If you can transcend the boundaries of a specific religion ... I don't mean put aside that religion. Hold onto that path if it feels right to you. But don't be hemmed in by its boundaries. Just because something is outside of that religion, don't disregard it but take it as a useful tool ... If you can do that, you can bring in the balance that you each need. We're not speaking here of Christian or Buddhist practice, but of spiritual practice.

Devotional meditation may also take many paths. Prayer is one. *Metta* or lovingkindness meditation is a devotional practice. There is also guru yoga, chanting, and mantra of the names of God. Even such a practice such as *dana* (generosity) can be a devotional practice when that which is offered is given with love and the thought of the Divine or Absolute. The most important part of devotional practice is the opening of the heart.

There are also the support practices to these foundation practices of Vipassana and devotional meditation. Support practices are anything which shows up the ego for what it is. For example, in some religious faiths one does what is called a "prostration" practice, prostrating oneself on the ground, over and over again. At first, especially in your Western culture, you may look at that and say, "That's stupid. I don't need to do that, touch my head or body to the floor; I'm too sophisticated for that ..." When you have decided to try it—and remember, you need not be prostrating yourself to an idol or to a specific religious teacher or to anything but this love beyond which all must be humbled—when you decide to try it, somewhere around the fiftieth or sixtieth time up and down, as the muscles are feeling weary, there's a voice that says, "I don't want to do this. I've had enough of this." Aha! Maybe this is what it's about. You start to see the "I" in it, all that self. Can there be bowing or chanting with no somebody to do it?

Barbara had a wonderful experience at the first Zen meditation retreat she attended. It was winter. The woman leading the retreat was a friend of hers and had told her, "You need not participate in anything that you don't want to participate in. You can just watch." But Barbara thought she would do whatever the others were doing. She is used to a bell rung to end of sitting; then people get up and walk at their own pace. Here the bell was rung the first time and everybody stood up, pushed their cushions against the wall and marched around the room several times. The retreat had started in the evening so it was night, dark and cold out. Two times, three times around the room. They were barefoot. The front door was open and everyone marched outdoors and around the yard several times. Barbara stood there on the porch. "I don't want to go out there. I'm barefoot! It's cold!" People were running. All this ego arose, saying, "I don't want to! I don't like this! I choose this, and not that!"

This is one thing these support practices offer you: a chance to see the ego as it arises in a controlled situation where you have no other work to do besides looking at that ego and learning about it. Yes, ego does arise very often throughout your life. You don't have to create artificial situations to see it arise. But it's very convenient to have it arise in a situation where you have nothing to do but watch it and learn about it. There are many other different kinds of support practices: prostration practice, mantra meditation, chanting. They each offer a different kind of learning. Beyond these are the specific focus practices such as jhanic practice (concentration) or chakra meditation which works with the body energy fields. Each has an importance when used appropriately.

My suggestion to those of you who wish to meditate is to ideally find a skilled teacher—or, if that is impossible for some reason, then a clearly written book that is very simple, not complex—and begin to do some practice faithfully. It doesn't matter what so much as that you do it faithfully. With a teacher you will avoid many mistakes. You will have someone to guide your way. If you are learning with a book you are going to have to seek your own inner wisdom more. You must be in touch with your own balance or have a teacher to help you find that balance: when to bring in more devotional practice, when to bring in more concentration, energy work, or mindfulness practice.

I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to bring such practice into your lives. Meditation truly is the tool that will lead you home.

I thank the questioner for the opportunity to share my views on this. Needless to say, I feel quite strongly about it. There is a bit more I would like to say about meditation, but I do want these last five minutes for a small guided meditation so I'll end here. There are other kinds of meditation I have not spoken about at all. They all have their value, but I consider them more support than foundation practices. That is all.

Meditation

I want to offer a very simple meditation that you can take home and practice which will help connect you to the light body. I want you to open your eyes ... find someone across the room to rest your gaze on ... soft ... unfocused ... just let your gaze rest there ...

For the purpose of this meditation, it would be easiest if it were a person and not an object. You need not look in that person's face, although you may if you choose ...

Notice that person's breathing ... You may not be able to see their breathing, but let awareness rest on the fact that that person is breathing in and breathing out ... Notice your own exhalation ... Follow it across the room ... Notice the other's inhalation ... Whose breath is it? ... Where does that exhalation go when you send it out from yourself? ...

Keeping the gaze soft ... unfocused ... Be aware of your own inhalation ... Breathe in deeply ... filling the lungs ... What are you breathing in? ... Is there any boundary? ...

(We do this for some time.)

Very slowly raise your hand and in groups of two or three, as is convenient, allow your hand to come close to but not make contact with that of another being ...

You may close your eyes here to concentrate better if you wish ... If there is an occasional physical touch of the hands, that's okay ...

Feel the energy ... your energy radiating outward and the other's energy radiating in toward you ... Can you allow the boundary to dissolve so that you more fully send out your own energy field and receive the other? ...

(We do this for some time.)

Now I'm going to ask you to divide your attention a bit ... Breathing out ... sending out your air, your breath ... as you breath out, also releasing the energy from your hand ... allowing it to move out ... Breathing in and drawing into you the breath ... no boundaries ... draw in the energy field of the other as well ... It will be harder perhaps ... If there is boundary or defendedness just note that it's there ... nothing you need to do about it ...

(We do this for some time.)

(Tape ends.)

(Filled in by Aaron after tape was transcribed.)

I asked the group to rest in that space where energy merged. Notice any barriers as they arise. No need to do anything about such walls, only to note them as manifestations of the relative plane and move back to the boundaryless breath, to the energy which is not owned but shared. Just rest in that awareness of no boundary.

Wednesday, January 12, 1994

Aaron's talk

Good evening and my love to you all. I am Aaron. This evening, as most Wednesday nights, Barbara and her family ate dinner early. And then Barbara made an effort to do the preparations needed here: vacuum, fill oil lamps, set out cushions. Her family includes a young teenager who is not always as reasonable or considerate as she would wish and who seems to choose 6:30 Wednesday night to push at her with his needs.

By this point, she might expect that, anticipate and plan an extra half-hour into her schedule. So, she's participating in the ... I won't call it angry—they're not screaming at one another—but in the pressured or anxious situation that escalates as the minutes pass.

She is aware that she needs a good length of time to meditate and really still herself so that her own tensions or thoughts don't intrude on the channeling. She then starts to feel tense: "I'm not going to have enough time to meditate." And she gets sucked right in to his irritations, which is, in a sense, just what he's trying to provoke. He's learned how to push the buttons, when he can get a rise out of Mom. This is not a bad kid we're talking about—a teenager who, like many, lives a bit in his world and rather scoffs at the adult's world.

The reason I'm telling you this story is because Barbara then comes to the edges of doing what so many of you do. She almost gets caught in a bind that says, how am I going to be spiritual and channel when I'm feeling this anger? As if there is that which is spiritual—lovingkindness, generosity, peace, harmony—and that which is not spiritual, like anger or greed or other kinds of hostility.

What does this word "spiritual" mean? We can see the anger is disharmonious, but we really need to examine the meaning of the word, spiritual. As soon as we call harmony, spiritual, and disharmony, non-spiritual, we're setting ourselves up for failure because you are humans and you are always going to feel disharmony at times. His provocative behavior and her irritation at his provocative behavior need not create disharmony, in the deepest sense. What creates the disharmony for Barbara is her sense of fear and the way her energy closes. He offers provocative behavior. If she can continue to love him, and even to love herself, while she sees anger arising, to continue to feel connected and empathize with his pain, while still expressing a clear "No, this is not the appropriate time for this discussion," then there doesn't need to be disharmony.

This is what I want you to look at: what are the roots of that disharmony? Is it something that comes at you from without, or is it something that arises from within? It's very easy to love others when they are kind and loving and generous. How do you learn to love others when they are angry? How do you learn to love yourself when you are angry?

We had a discussion with a friend today which included talk of the New Age movement and this idea that you create your own reality. Many of you have heard me talk about this before, how on the ultimate level this is true. And yet, there's so much blame in that statement because if you understood how you were creating a disharmonious reality

and why you were creating that, most assuredly you would not create it. It's like telling a child who wears a diaper, a child who's just pre-toilet trained, "You're creating a mess." If the child knew how to use the toilet, she would use it.

We all want to live in harmony. The question is not inspiring the desire to live in harmony, but understanding what distorts that move toward harmony, and finding compassion for that in ourselves which closes down our energy instead of disdain for it. Then, and only then, do you begin to live in harmony with yourself. And until you can do that, you cannot live in harmony with others.

You begin by letting go of the delusion of opposites, including harmony versus disharmony, good and bad, love and hatred, selfishness and generosity. I'm sure that in your mathematics classes as children you all worked with those lines that started with an x and added: $x+1$, $x+2$, $x+17$, $x+83$, and minus: $x-4$, $x-22$, and so on. It's easy to visualize that kind of line. It is one line, not two: $x+17$, $x-17$. $X+generosity$, $x-generosity$, various proportions of the same quality.

There is not a good or generous or kind that is the summation of that, the ideal of it. Nor is there a zero point of selfishness, greed or fear. It's a spectrum. And you are never in one fixed place on that spectrum. Sometimes you're more loving, sometimes less. Sometimes more agitated, sometimes calmer.

You know that I am not suggesting that it's okay to act in ways that are harmful to others, but can we let go of the labels of "good" and "bad" which are what create the tensions and lead us to say, "This isn't spiritual," and to grasp at that which we conclude **is** spiritual. That motivation of judgment—I shouldn't do this, I should do that—will never lead you to ultimate peace. It may train you in paths of self-discipline. It may help alert you to the arising of tensions. But it also creates its own kind of tension.

Instead, can there be clear looking at what the tension is about? Can you begin to feel the way your emotional energy body closes off? Some weeks ago, we talked about the fact that there are four energy bodies just as there are four bodies, that each of these bodies—the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual—has its own energy field, and that you can be open in one energy field and closed in another.

What I'm talking about here is the raising of boundaries to defend yourself: not coming into a wholeness within yourself, but seeing the need to close yourself in, either to hold yourself in or to keep something else out. When somebody approaches you with repugnant behavior and at an inconvenient time, can you see the rising of protectedness for yourself, the fear "I'm going to get hurt" ... "Perhaps my needs won't be met" ... "I won't be able to do what I need to do and then other people will criticize me because I fall short"?

Maybe you're working on a deadline and another office worker starts to pick a quarrel. You've got to get this done or when your boss comes in in half an hour he's going to be angry. It's not the picking the quarrel that creates the tension. You would be able to allow him to pick his quarrel and just let it drift past if you did not have the fear, "It's going to cause me pain because somebody else is going to judge me; therefore, I've got to shut him off so I can do what I need to do." And then those boundaries come up. Then you can no longer hear the one who's feeling so argumentative. Instead of

being able to say, "I hear you; I hear your pain," what you want to say is, "Shut up. Leave me alone." The walls are up. Self and other.

Spiritual work does not mean non-existence of walls, but working skillfully, kindly to yourself and to others, with those inevitable walls that come up and down. It involves seeing how your energy closes up, and constantly having the courage and commitment to ask yourself to reopen it.

We're going to do something a bit different tonight. We're going to take a break now for about ten minutes and do an exercise, a very specific exercise. And then I'm going to conclude this talk with some thoughts about the exercise you've done. I will channel a bit of this and then let Barbara lead it. What I will want you to do is each to choose a partner—if possible, someone whom you know and feel some closeness to but, if it's a stranger, that's okay. Try to pick somebody whose energy feels comfortable with yours.

We are going to ask you to divide yourselves, at random: one in each pair call itself A, and the other one call itself B. Let me describe this process first and then Barbara will cease channeling and will get it moving. Pairs, one A, one B, what you will do is spend a few minutes holding hands and looking into one another's eyes, trying to allow the dissolution of boundaries and allow connection. Then, when Barbara suggests that A's do this, all the A's will withdraw their hands, lower their gaze and, in essence, withdraw from the B's.

I want you to watch very carefully. Of course, it's a contrived situation and the B's know they are not being rejected. But I still want you to feel, "What happens to my energy field when the other withdraws from our mutual energy?" I want the A's to watch, "What happens within me when I withdraw?" We'll hold that for a minute or two, to give you time to experience it. Without the visual contact and touch, can you reconnect your energy fields? Can you notice any growing of protective barriers and allow them to dissolve and come back together? Then Barbara will ask for the A's to raise their gaze again, connect again, and will repeat it with B's lowering their gaze.

One last connection and then we'll end. I estimate that it will take about ten minutes. Then I would like all of you to talk a bit about it. And, finally, there's a bit more that I would like to share. If there is anybody who does not feel comfortable participating in this exercise, that's fine. It's in no way compulsory. Simply sit back and watch what's happening. Watch your energy as carefully as you can and ask yourself how you feel being there as observer. Are there barriers coming up? What's happening for you as observer? That is all.

Exercise

(Some of this is not on tape.)

Barbara: With both of the pair remaining as aware of their energy fields as possible, the designated A withdraw, look down, pull away.

Aaron: I am Aaron. Is there any feeling of rejection, of loss, any feeling of barrier going up? I know this is a contrived situation, but I want you to get in as deep touch as is possible with the feelings of connection and separation of energy field. Just that. No thoughts about it—whether it's good or bad, whether you're doing it right or not. Just,

what is happening to my energy field? Both A and B. If possible, B's keep your eyes open looking at your partner who has withdrawn.

(We do.)

A's, as you feel ready, lift up your gaze and extend your hands again, reconnect. Pay close attention to what happens to the energy fields, both.

Now I am going to ask the B's to withdraw in the same way. Pay close attention to the building of boundaries, should that occur. Is there any reaching out for the energy that is withdrawn? Something that was within your grasp and has pulled back—do you reach out to grasp it, or can you allow the other to withdraw without fear? If there is fear, is that fear a product of this moment? Are you being rejected? Or is it old conditioned mind saying that, when something withdraws from me, I must grab at it? Can you see how that fear arises? Can you see the way the boundaries come up?

(We do.)

Please reconnect one more time, allowing your energy fields to merge again. As you are ready, allow yourself to move back into your own energy, your gaze and your hands to separate. Take your time. That is all.

Discussion

Aaron: I am Aaron. This was hard for some of you. Please do not chastise yourself for that. Some of you are more defended than others. You are all learning how to work with that defendedness. And some of you are very deeply moved by the amount of connection you were able to establish. Different things happened for each of you. I do want you to discuss it, but I hope that you can discuss it without comparing yourself, without a sense, "Did I do this right or wrong? Good or bad?" Just, what happened for you? Did you learn anything? Just that. That is all.

(Pairs discuss their experiences with their partners before whole group discussion.)

J: The first section, when M withdrew her energy, was not a problem for me. I was okay. What surprised me was first, how easy it was to withdraw my energy, just to completely pull in and how it was then to reconnect. It wasn't hard for me to reconnect with her when she withdrew and then came back. I didn't have a hard time reconnecting. But, after I withdrew and had to reconnect, that was more difficult.

I kept having this image of a heart with many doors and, depending on what was happening, some or none or, at times, all those doors are open or closed, depending on how safe I feel or what's happening emotionally.

S: What I feel is ridiculous—absolutely ridiculous—that any of us would withdraw from one another, that any of us would sit and look in one another's eyes and could possibly withdraw. Could possibly withdraw. That I could sit in this group and be with one person and not look at that person and feel part of the group totally, not just that one person, because we are all humbly joining together as a group.

C: I did this in real life, at a workshop. I had a misunderstanding with another woman about going to lunch. When I tried to discuss it with her later, I found it very frustrating

that she wouldn't look at me at all. There was absolutely no eye contact. And, in our discussion, we weren't getting anywhere at all.

So, I asked her if it was all right with her if we stopped talking and turned toward each other and just looked at each other. And she said, "Sure." So, we did that and, clearly, the love energy started flowing immediately, and all that words had not been able to do was resolved. And we felt such an openness, such a loving flowing energy that it resolved itself with a hug and there wasn't any more need for words. And for the rest of the week, we were very close. So, I suggest it as an exercise in real life, too.

M: I was surprised when J and I were connecting, the bind I was in as I felt my terror of connecting and the longing to do that.

M2: I realized that if this wasn't an exercise, I would have felt very rejected when M3 turned away. Because it was an exercise, I just felt ... I was amazed at how strongly I could feel the difference in exercise. And also because of what Aaron said to me this morning, I was very aware of moving back and forth from my head to my heart, and the constant verbal chatter that my head puts out, and how much more fully I experienced it when I put that aside.

M3: I worked on this today in my personal life and, having opened to some of the pain around abandonment, I was able to not feel anxious about M2 pulling away. But I could feel the habitual barriers of closing up to feel safe from that abandonment.

K: My experience was different from others because I have been moving through a time of strong self-judgment and a feeling of shame. I found myself not wanting to open at first because of the feeling of shame and wanting to hide me from the other. So, when he pulled away, I felt relief and safety. I did experience a deeper opening by the last connecting and that was very healing. But it was interesting to watch how much I wanted to hide in the corner until I resolve these issues and accept myself again.

J2: I also experienced this in my personal life this week. Yesterday, what I felt was also rejection at first from someone else as they pulled away from me. But after the sadness left, I felt that I was able to just allow the process to happen and let it be. And, as I was able to let it be, it became more peaceful and okay.

C2: One quick one. I described it to my partner as feeling fun, like I wanted almost to laugh. But, after listening to a few things and thinking more about what it is, I think it was more a delight, rather than fun. Fun, meaning that it was a good feeling and it made me smile.

Aaron: I am Aaron. I thank you all for your participation and your very honest thoughts. Yesterday, we had a lengthy phone conversation with an out-of-state friend. The friend with whom she is living was needing to withdraw his energy. She knows he loves her, but he needed to withdraw his energy. Not to reject her, just to withdraw his energy. As we talked, she came to see that his withdrawing his energy was his own need and not a rejection of her. When she read it as rejection and, in defense, put up her own boundaries, it evoked an unfavorable reaction in him. Then he felt rejected. Then his withdrawal shifted subtly from simply moving into himself to rejecting her in return. As we talked, she began to see the pattern they were setting up for themselves.

My question is this: What is this old mind, in all of you, that needs to control another in order to feel safe in yourself, that wants to grasp at or stay connected with another who needs to withdraw? Can you begin to allow each other to come and go as you need to, keeping your own energy field open, unless there is a reason why you need to close it? If you need to close it, know that you need to close it. There's nothing bad about protecting yourself, but ask yourself, "Am I protecting against something that's real or am I protecting against all the old happenings throughout history? Am I unworthy? Am I rejected?" All of those things that come up in you.

You are not asking these questions as a self-improvement project. You're asking because harmony, in your own lives and in the world, depends on learning to keep your energy open to each other, to keep noticing the boundaries as they arise and asking yourself, very gently and patiently, to release them. Not to get rid of them—no aversion to the boundaries—to release them because, in this moment, I am safe and I do not need boundaries.

Now, some degree of boundary is useful. You function in relative reality from the place of an "I"-self. But that self is a tool ... *(Tape ends.)*

(Tape begins.) ... to make the mistake of thinking that that is who you are. I thought I could finish that sentence before the tape ended!

Please take your break now and, if you wish, it might be useful to come back to some of this. I would also like to hear your responses to the homework from last week. May I ask, as you go off to have your tea and conversation, that you stay alert. Watch how you put up boundaries and how you dissolve boundaries. And ask yourself, "What is this boundary? Where is it coming from? Who is creating it? Is it me in this moment, or is it all the past aspects of me who have put up boundaries habitually to stay safe? Do I really need this boundary right now? Can I come back into connection? What heightens connection and what reduces connection?" I thank you for your time and listening, and for allowing me to share these thoughts with you. That is all.

(Break.)

Barbara: Aaron is asking, do we have questions or do you want him to talk more in depth about what we started the evening with?

(Group decides to hear Aaron talk more in depth.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. Your inclination as humans is to figure everything out. You all have wonderful, fascinating minds. They whirl around. They ask whether what you are feeling is appropriate or not. They put labels—this is **good**, that's **bad**—on everything. You do that as a way of maintaining a sense of safety.

On the relative plane, it's true that at times you are threatened. The physical body may be unsafe. On the ultimate plane, you are always safe. There's nothing outside of you. You don't have to control your environment.

This does not mean that if you want tomatoes in the summer, you don't need to go out and plant them, but you plant them in harmony with the earth. You take these seedlings and lovingly put them in the ground with a full expectation that, as you care for them with love, they will eventually grow and feed you tomatoes with love. There's not a manipulateness about it, but a sharing of energy.

It's the very same non-manipulative shared energy that I'm hoping to inspire in you in your human relationships. Instead of figuring out—"How can I move so as to be liked here? Is he or she rejecting me?"—all of that figuring, can you just rest in your heart, in that part of you that knows it's loved? What builds up the boundaries? When does this controlling mind and manipulation begin? Can you see the connection between that and the building of boundaries, the need to feel defended and safe?

This is the primary question: Who needs to feel safe? What is this desire to feel safe? In this moment, am I really unsafe? If B has withdrawn, is B rejecting me? And, if B is rejecting me, can I allow B to reject me? Do I have to scream and wave my hands and stamp my feet? Unsafe! Unfair! I'm being rejected! What is B's need to reject? Let B reject if it needs to.

I know that if you love B and B is acting in a rejecting manner, that hurts. I am not suggesting that you allow B to use you as a doormat. It is perfectly appropriate to tell B, "You are hurting me and, if you continue to open to me in that way and then pull back so I never know where I stand, I am going to have to leave this relationship." That's not manipulative; that is a clear statement, "I will not be used as a doormat. I will not be drawn into your unskillful patterns. I fully expect to be in a relationship with someone who can love me in return."

This is the way you create your own reality: by knowing that you are lovable and asking of those who surround you that they offer you love, by saying "no" if they try to walk on you. But see the clear difference between "rejection" and that A or B who's feeling dejected, frightened in themselves, not rejecting you at all but rejecting relationship perhaps because of their present pain and fear.

You can give that friend space to reject if they need to, while making it clear "You are hurting me because I want to feel connected and you withdraw that connection which I very much enjoy ... That is the way you are hurting me. You are not hurting me by making me feel unworthy. No one can make me feel unworthy. You are hurting me by depriving me of the loving, open-hearted connection which I feel is my due, my birthright. I choose not to live without that connection. It's your choice." But then you do not have to reject that A or B; you do not have to reject that other in defense of yourself. You keep your heart and your energy fully open to them. You leave the door open for them to make the decision, "I can trust this one. I can come back to connection." But, if they withdraw for their own reasons, and then you withdraw, you slam the door shut. Then you're creating a different reality: one that says, "I am somebody who needs to be defended," rather than "I am one who is worthy of love." And you reap what you sow.

K has asked me to speak of the spiral that we spoke of earlier today. Sometimes you fall into a sense of grief, despair, deep anger or pain. If you feel these heavy feelings and have a sense, "I must get rid of these," it drives you further down. I said to K that the whole thing is like a spiral. It goes up. Your energy expands and opens and reaches up to the stars. Your energy contracts and moves down into heaviness and darkness. You're constantly moving on this spiral. You're not fixed on it. And the point that is down here and the point that is up there are connected. They are not opposites, not dual in any way. It's one line. It connects.

Kahlil Gibran in The Prophet says it exquisitely: "Your joy and your sorrow are one." It cannot be said any more clearly than that. Your ability to allow yourself to dissolve boundaries, to open your heart, puts you at risk. You're going to feel more pain because you are not defended. You're also going to be able to feel love and openness and connection in a very heightened way.

You begin to know that it's safe to feel that pain. It hurts. Does it hurt any less when you shelter yourself? Instead of feeling pain, you feel isolated. Is that any less hurtful? You begin to allow yourself to be vulnerable. The more you can release these boundaries each time they arise, seeing the old mind nature of them, the higher up you move in the spiral, the more your energy opens out and embraces the universe. That is all. Are there questions?

C: In Aaron's first talk tonight he mentioned attachment and why did we feel bad when one person withdrew their energy. That can take many forms, as you know, withdrawing energy with children as well. And I wondered if Aaron could speak more about attachment and detachment? I understand in a general way that we should not be attached. It's more skillful not to be attached. But it seems like a very human condition to be attached to husbands, wives, children, friends.

C2: I have a related question. When Aaron says not to be a doormat, also saying that when you're rejected, I'm a little confused there. Do you open yourself again to that person? And, once rejected, and the pain that's there, how do you manage that?

Aaron: I am Aaron. My dear ones, there is a relative human who feels rejected when another withdraws its energy. The other may be withdrawing its energy because it just remembered that it had an appointment or it suddenly has a stomach ache. But you almost all move into the question, "Did I do something bad?" This myth of unworthiness comes up—more forcefully for some than for others. But at least a bit in all of you. Very few of you have learned to look at the other and suppose, "That person may have a stomach ache."

Perhaps they don't have a stomach ache. Perhaps they are rejecting you. Maybe they don't like the way you look. Or you have a very different viewpoint of life and they feel threatened by it and don't want to talk to you anymore, so they reject you. What is rejection? It's one being acting out its fear, acting out its discomfort by withdrawing its energy from another. What possible connection can this have with bad or good? One person will reject another because he or she has body odor and then turn around and reject somebody else because they're wearing a perfume that they don't like. Who's to decide which odor is good or bad?

Yes, you may try to keep yourselves clean and your behavior pleasing to other people—not in order to be accepted, but simply because it's a loving way to act toward others, not to choose purposefully to offend others, a kind of attack on others. But know the difference between that and acting in pleasing ways to others because you are seeking acceptance, because what one accepts, another is not going to accept. One will like you if you're quiet and another if you're boisterous. Be yourself.

You must listen to the wisdom of your heart and know when another is acting in a rejecting manner, withdrawing their energy. If they do that in a regularly patterned way, as an attack on you it seems, then it is appropriate to point it out. You don't have

to hate them for doing it. When you know you have not been rejected because you're bad, when you know it's the other person withdrawing their energy for whatever reason, you can ask the other, "Did I make you uncomfortable in some way that's causing your withdrawal?" They might say, "Yes, you acted obnoxious." They might say, "Yes, you acted too loving. It threatens me."

Do you keep coming back to it? My answer here would be, how honest are you able to be with one another? Are you becoming lost in a negatively-codependent pattern of hurting each other, or are you able to observe the places where you've hurt one another, talk about them and make an effort to move past them? Are you each teaching the other?

You do not continually set yourself up to be stepped on, but you also must know nobody else can really hurt you. They can't reject you. There is no such thing as acceptance or rejection. It's all a myth. It's a myth that you've convinced yourself is true. So, when you feel rejected, you feel unworthy. You become angry at yourself for that unworthiness, or angry at the other for pointing out your sense of unworthiness. When you know who you truly are and rest in that beauty that is you, you stop needing affirmation from others that you're okay. Then you are not threatened and they can no longer pull you into their game. They withdraw their energy. You continue to smile and to love them. Their game doesn't work anymore, whatever that game may have been. You cut it off.

What is your relationship to this person? Is it partner or child or parent? Is there a deep commitment that urges you to deepen the relationship and grow together, or is it a casual acquaintanceship in which you may decide, "I turn my back on this. I don't need to be a part of this anymore"?

Attachment is a funny word. Attachment and love are not synonymous. Attachment grows out of a place of fear that needs the other's approval or acceptance to feel okay. It is a kind of negative co-dependence. I'm not speaking about needing others, opening your hearts to others. There's a lovely song, "People who need people are the luckiest people in the world," which I interpret to mean, "People who have come to see their deepest interconnections with others and realize they cannot live in a false sense of isolation, that they need not so much to **be** loved as to **love**, but when they love they are loved in return ... their deepest joy is to share their hearts with others." That is not attachment. That is a kind of love that lets the other go.

We come back to my phone conversation yesterday with our friend in Massachusetts. If her partner was withdrawing at this new juncture in their relationship—not seriously withdrawing, not disappearing for days at a time, just pulling back his energy—could she give him space to do that? Attachment is the clinging where, when the other withdraws its energy, you immediately go after it. You're afraid you'll lose it. When you know who you are, you know you can't lose anything. It may need to go off for five minutes or an hour or a week. No, you can never be sure it will come back, but you're okay. You don't need anything.

The world is filled with love and connection and joy. The world is also filled with pain and loss and sorrow. It's all there. How open can you keep your heart? Can you continue to know, I am okay whether I have this or don't have this? Can you get out of that rut of when it's taken away it's because I am bad, and when it's given it's a pat on

the back, I'm good? Cut through that delusion. Look at attachment. See the difference between attachment and love. Are there further questions? That is all.

(No further questions.)

(We form a circle, holding hands.) One minute of silence. Feel the energy from the others ... Feel your own unique but non-separate energy field ... Focus on your breath as a foundation, as place to rest, and simply feel the energy in the room and any tendency to withdraw or to grasp at ... Allow boundary to dissolve ... Allow the heart to open ...

Can you expand awareness to include all the angels, all the guides and loving spirits that fill this room? ...

My dear ones, trust your hearts' knowledge of how deeply you are loved, and that you do not ever need to be afraid ...

Good night to you all, with my love. That is all.

Wednesday, January 19, 1994

A Message from Aaron

(Aaron considers this last transcript and this preliminary note to be the start of the second semester. He has asked that this last transcript be included here as indication of where the work is going, and that it be the start of book two, of the spring term work, which will be available in early summer.)

(Channeled privately before the class and printed.)

Aaron: I am Aaron. My greetings and love to you all. Some of you have worked with me and with Barbara for many years, some, for a shorter time. Some of you are new to our work. I would speak to you all about our present path together.

Like a rope, your spiritual paths are composed of many strands. We can name these strands in many ways, following the language of many different religious traditions. Let us be simple and non-technical. One great strand is simply living lovingly and skillfully in the world. Working within this strand pulls together the substrands of morality manifest as intention to offer your energy with non-harm, non-judgment, and compassion. This strand is fundamental. It was the basis of our work for several years.

Another strand is mindfulness, deepening attention. Amongst its substrands are concentration, skillful use of energy, greater tranquillity and the opening heart which increasingly allows one to be present in each moment. You can already see how these two strands interweave and depend upon one another for their strength.

Let us call the third strand wisdom. Within this strand are the deepening awareness of your true nature and of the interdependent nature of all that is in the universe, and the ability to rest more stably in ultimate reality. Exploration of this strand is newer in our work together.

Last fall we began to speak less frequently of the skillful living in relative reality and more about the balance. This shift is not because I find skillful living in relative reality to be unimportant, but because it's time to more fully bring in the third strand. You must continue to work with mindfulness. You must continue to strive to live lovingly and with non-harm, to understand the ramifications of your actions, words and thoughts, and also the meaning of being "someone" who is striving.

We could continue forever to talk about nothing but how to live skillfully in this moment and to work on it. It is highly important but insufficient. The preliminary work is essential. It shows you where there is aversion to relative reality. It opens your heart to this human who is afraid. It teaches you equanimity with all that arises in mind and body. As long as the aversion is treated as solid and something to be escaped from, then ultimate reality, heaven or nirvana, become something separate, something to be grasped for, a place of escape. Relative and ultimate reality, heaven and hell, samsara and nirvana, are non-dual. If you grasp at ultimate reality as escape from the pain of your humanness, you only dig yourself in further to the patterns of aversion, grasping and fear. Learning about this has been our foundation. Most important is that we have

raised awareness of intention to live skillfully, and opened compassion for the being who finds that so difficult. That intention and growing compassion walk with you.

Now we have brought in this third strand. You are learning to see how boundaries arise, and that they are the delusion of old mind. You are learning to let go of identification with that arising, and to come back and rest in what various systems call pure mind, rigpa, the light body or higher self. These terms are not quite synonymous but are close enough to bring them together in this way.

We all meet here together, new and old to this work. Those who are newer to it travel hand in hand with us. To all of you, a word of caution: constantly you must go back. You must earnestly practice this skillful living in the present, living with love and an open heart, compassion and non-judgment. My book, Aaron, and many transcripts are available as guidance. Your meditation practice is your tool.

Tonight we jump into a new phase of this work for which all of this has been preparatory. In past months we have been discussing the light body, the perfect, unwrinkled sheet of paper, the illusory wrinkles and how the physical, emotional and mental bodies reflect those wrinkles. If I were to introduce you directly to practices of identifying with that perfect sheet of paper without the practices of finding compassion for that which experiences itself as wrinkled, I would be teaching you duality and disassociation with the human, not the integration and non-duality which are where this path truly leads.

We move ahead then with this caution: what I teach here is not escape from your humanness, but deeper embracing of that humanness, wrinkles and all. We will begin tonight with the introduction of very specific practices for releasing identification with the wrinkles, be they emotional, mental or physical distortions. It is essential that you see that this work must be done with no aversion to any of those distortions, only the skillful realization, "This is not who I am. I need not carry this any more. I let it go."

It will be each of your responsibility to be aware of where there is aversion and to do further work on the relative plane with the human who is still stuck in unskillful distortions.

This is background. I would like this statement to be made available tonight and in following weeks so that each being who joins us understands that this present work is only the blending of the strands and that each strand still must be attended to. This is important. Given a physical distortion such as a painful back, or an emotional distortion as the frequent arising of jealousy, if there is any aversion, you are not releasing the distortion but solidifying it through the attempt to get rid of it. I am not suggesting this is bad, but it will be painful and lead to further adhering karma. You must attend to the relative being.

I fully trust that people are always where they need to be. If you are new here tonight or in these past few weeks and, if our work speaks to your heart, trust that you are meant to be here even if it seems very new to you. Trust that the pieces will come together as they need to. I do not wish to frighten you with my cautions, only to remind you this work will ask your deep energy and effort, skillfully given. Our work is not about judgment, preference and aversion, nor about avoidance of these, but about equanimity. It is about balance, non-duality, and opening the heart.

Wednesday, January 19, 1994

My love to you all as we walk this path together. That is all.

Wednesday, January 19, 1994

Aaron's talk

Aaron: Good evening and my love to you all. I am Aaron. The introduction that we channeled earlier today gives you background. Instead of the normal opening talk tonight, I'm first going to explain this process that we'll be practicing: the various steps of it, why we will do those steps and how to use this practice as a tool in your daily life. After this introduction, we will answer your questions and then take a break. Then we'll come back, do a guided meditation with it and use whatever time is left after the meditation for other questions.

Some of you worked with me last year learning about the interdependent co-arising of all phenomena, of all experiences of body and mind. By this I mean that when **this** arises then **that** arises. The arising of **that** is conditional on the arising of **this**. When **this** ceases then **that** ceases. Some of you have read the book, No Chain At All, which is based on the transcripts of that semester's work.

For those of you who are completely unfamiliar with this background, you are still able to join the work we're doing now. But you must know that this past teaching is at least useful for your consideration and will be very helpful in the present work. It is one of the building blocks of the present work. It is not necessary to start with it but, eventually, you may want to come around to learning about it.

Through the past years, we have spent most of our time here looking at the heavy emotions and thoughts that arise and learning how to work with those more skillfully. You have learned how to be not quite so reactive to what arises in your life. This has created more space for you and more joy. As I said in this introduction, we could go on with that work forever. This is what I have called in the past several months "horizontal practice," practice with relative reality.

Last year we began what I have called "vertical practice" in which there is conscious focus on allowing in the wisdom mind that cuts through the delusion of a self involved in these situations. Many of you have done various exercises with me learning how to shift the balance to that pure heart/mind, pure awareness, and away from the small ego self. What I've emphasized is the importance that there be no aversion to the small ego self, but compassion for the human that keeps getting caught. This, too, has been a core of our work in past years.

Now we are come to a place where I want to begin to bring it together. Last year we did many exercises leading you to rest more fully in pure heart/mind. We looked at that pure light body, the perfect white sheet of paper. Almost all of you have seen Barbara crumple that paper—an actual piece of paper. She opened it out again, and then we asked, "Can you see the perfect unwrinkled sheet in the wrinkled sheet?"

In recent months we have begun to emphasize the ways that you can rest awareness in that unwrinkled sheet—in awareness of pure heart/mind—without aversion to the relative self. We've also talked at some length about the ways the relative being reflects, not the pure mind—not the pure white sheet of paper—but the wrinkles. You

get caught in that identity. When that first wrinkle first was created, it served some purpose.

For illustration, we might use the wrinkle of raising boundaries, the distortion that you need to be separate, that you **are** separate. That distortion served a purpose at first. It allowed you to feel safe and in control. Now you begin to see that's not who you are.

Yesterday Barbara was swimming back and forth in the pool. There were a young couple who were a bit wild in their play, diving down in the deep end and coming up, taking over the whole space. Swimming is a daily meditative activity in which Barbara completely relaxes and merges into the water and space. Boundaries fall away for her. She was watching herself, how each time she came to the deep end, aware of these swimmers—that they were not in any way watching out for her, but likely to dive right on top of her—she tensed. The boundaries came up.

Yes, there was real danger. In fact, one of them, coming up, kicked her very hard in the stomach. There was real danger that there could be injury. But the boundaries were still not necessary. It was useful to be alert each time she entered that end of the pool, to watch that they were not about to jump or dive, to watch that they were not under water and about to come up. That's all. Where did the boundaries come from?

As she swam, she asked, "What are these boundaries? What is this wall that comes up each time I enter this part of the pool?" Old mind. The need to be safe. The need to control. It has nothing to do with the present situation. In a similar way, you may look at the arising of greed, of jealousy, of rage, of impatience, of any heavy emotion.

We've come this far in past months: looking at what arises and seeing how it has grown out of old mind conditioning. Repeatedly, I have asked you to note that arising and come back to this moment. The illusion of distortion may remain though, the wrinkle in the paper. There may not be reactivity to it, but are you still identifying with it, still trying to get rid of **this**, to be **that**?

Remember that the light body is perfect. The distortion is in relative reality. It is this relative with which you continue to identify, owning the relative self, wrinkles and all. Each time you re-confirm that distortion, it solidifies the identity. It plants a further karmic seed. Please note that to experience that you are not the wrinkle is very different than to grasp at not being the wrinkle, or to convince yourself of that fact. Thinking you are the wrinkle is just another wrinkle. Judging that new wrinkle is still another wrinkle! I am not suggesting aversion to identification with the relative self, only the accompanying clear seeing that the identification is grown out of illusion.

Now we have come to a place where we are ready to introduce exercises which will aid you not only to see the distortion of old mind conditioning, but to release that distortion instead of practicing it. We will begin in this week, and in coming weeks, working with emotional distortions, gentle ones at first, not the biggest ones. The same principles that I am teaching you can be applied to physical distortions and, finally, also, to adhering karma. Work with these will come later in the spring. You may no longer be planting the seed for new karma in this or that situation, but the old karma is still there, the roots are still there. This is one of the ways in which those roots can be allowed to dissolve. I don't want to get too deeply into that yet. First I want to stabilize this practice with something easier.

Before we start I would like you each to bring to mind some emotion which is discomforting to you and causes a withdrawing of your energy, causes barriers to arise. It does not have to be the heaviest emotion you work with. It may be something like impatience or judgment, desire to control, anger, greed, jealousy. I ask you simply to call to mind a situation in the past few days in which this emotion arose—not to involve yourself in the story of it, just to recall the incident and to make the decision, “This is the emotion and situation I will work with tonight.” In response to those of you who are unsure of what kind of emotion I’m talking about, it can be something as simple as the need to defend when you feel threatened or criticized. It doesn’t have to be a screaming rage. Pick something that’s a recurrent issue for you, and one specific recent situation.

(Pause while we do this.)

What I want to do now is talk about the four basic steps. They are steps that I hope you will be doing over and over and over—not just in meditation practice, but in your everyday life. I remind you, I will go through the steps and explain them. We will come back to each step in the doing of it.

The practice we are going to do has four essential parts. The first is that we note the intention that this practice is not just for ourselves but for all beings, to alleviate the suffering of all beings. To clarify this intention broadens awareness to the fact that the work we are doing is the work that all beings are doing, each in their own way and at their own pace. It helps us to dissolve the boundaries between self and other, to see the suffering not only of ourselves but of all beings. It helps us be aware of where there is selfishness and fear, where there is aversion and wanting to get rid of this or that discomforting feeling, and offer compassion to those fears in self and for all beings. It helps us remember our connection with all that is. So, the first step is simply to clarify one’s intention that one’s practice is for the alleviation of suffering of all beings.

The next step is one of outward expansion and release of barriers, which we have introduced here in one form or another many times before. Do you remember that meditation of expanding outward? You are not trying to expand outward, you are allowing the natural outward expansion from the small self into your true being. It is an allowing of the dissolution of barriers and separation. The prior step of intention is helpful here. It serves as inspiration that the work you are doing goes beyond you and does touch all beings. That helps you with the fear of letting barriers dissolve.

Last week we did an exercise preparatory to releasing barriers. Very briefly for those who were not present, you joined in pairs, facing one another, hands touching, eyes meeting. You allowed barriers to dissolve as much as was possible so that you felt in connection with the other. Then the one designated as A withdrew hands, dropped arms, withdrew energy. I asked you each to see if you could feel any barriers that arose. You rejoined and the one designated as B withdrew.

What we were doing is watching the arising and falling away of these barriers. We looked at the old mind conditioning through which those barriers were re-erected. We saw that there was not a tearing down of barriers so much as a realization that the barriers had never been there, that they were illusion created by the fears of old mind. I asked you to practice this during the week, simply allowing your energy to merge with others, feeling how barriers arose, as I described with Barbara in the swimming pool.

So, the second step is allowing energy and awareness to expand outward, allowing the barriers to dissolve. No grasping, but seeing the natural non-separation of your being. We've done a similar practice to this outward expansion with what is called "guru yoga": visualizing—or, with your eyes open, looking at a photograph of that Divine being or high master with whom you feel strong affinity, such as the Buddha, Jesus, Mary, or one of the various gurus you may have. The process of allowing your energy to merge with that being and its with you, moving out of the self, is similar to this practice of expanding outward.

We've done the same thing with what I've called "sky yoga." At other times, we've rested in the aperture in the breath, between inhale and exhale, breathing in ... space ... breathing out. There's just that brief instant of very pure awareness with no self involved in it. You have found the absolute NOW of that space, empty of any notion of self but filled only with ineffable Light. So, there have been a number of different expansion practices that we've introduced in the past year.

Finally, we have practiced what the Tibetans call "resting in rigpa." I have introduced that term but not used it often. Essentially, it is the practice of resting in pure heart/mind. We've watched thought arising and brought bare attention to that arising as a conditioned display. With that bare attention, we have seen that thought dissolved. At the time of its dissolution there was often a moment of pure awareness, in which you have rested. In this way, you have practiced non-ownership of what arises, practiced resting in the Pure Awareness that only sees the flow of arising without fixating on any content. Slowly, that Pure Awareness stabilizes and you begin to understand that this pure heart/mind is what you are, not the myriad comings and goings of thought from that mind.

There is a Buddhist teaching that one must remember that the finger pointing to the moon is not the moon itself. These are all tools to help you find Pure Awareness. They are not Pure Awareness. The expand outward practice, guru or sky yoga, breath practice, noting thought and the moment of dissolution of thought—they are all tools. I cannot offer the experience of Pure Awareness. I can only point my finger to it. But I promise you that it's there. You don't have to grasp at it because it is innate, only to become aware of it.

Each of you, in your own ways, has been working with one or another of these practices, working to identify and then to stabilize that space of pure heart/mind, to learn how to rest in that space for increasingly long periods. When I say long, it may only be a few seconds, but you're increasing your ability to rest there.

This is step two, then, and it will vary depending on what practices you have been using. Or, if this is new to you, which of these practices I've just described feels most familiar to you. What step two entails is dissolution of boundary and resting in pure heart/mind.

In step three, this expanded awareness looks, with love and compassion I would hope, at the relative human and remembers that discomforting emotional situation that I asked you to first consider you would work with tonight. This is where we move into something new. Pure Awareness has seen with clarity, "This is old mind. I don't own this." But there has still been the pain of the old identity with it, the old patterns of holding onto it. **What you are examining is not the thought or emotion itself but the**

contraction around that thought or emotion, indicative of your relationship with the thought or emotion. .

As we enter step four, we are going to shift balance from relative reality—the human who is involved in this pain—to ultimate reality, but we do so very carefully, with no aversion for that which the relative human is experiencing. With aversion, step four becomes a “getting rid of,” and solidifies self. Here you must watch very carefully. There must be an open heart. This is why we do not introduce this practice until you have done much work with awareness of what arises and learned to find equanimity with arising. **If there is aversion, can there be no aversion to the aversion? If aversion is present, it’s the aversion that needs to become the primary focus and not the emotion that preceded aversion.**

There is some confusion about the last statement. Let us regard the movement through step three, into four. If you are looking at how you move into jealousy and remembering a recent movement into jealousy and the discomfort of that, and you see aversion arise—“I don’t want this jealousy!”—then allow the focus of this step three to shift, seeing the pattern of aversion to what we experience, how painful it is, that constant putting yourself out of your heart, that constant self-judgment and denial of experience because it feels so threatening.

Whatever it is that you are looking at, I ask you to do it from this space of expanded awareness which sees the human involvement and makes the very conscious, skillful decision—with equanimity to aversion—“I do not need to own this anymore. I’ve been carrying this pattern around for how many lifetimes. I see how it arises out of certain conditions. I see how I get caught in the ownership of it. From this space of pure awareness, I see that I really can release that, just make the decision to let it go.”

This is the fourth step: release. Not getting rid of, but seeing through it, seeing it was never solid in the first place. It was your fear of it and the repeated patterns with it that made it appear solid. It is like those raindrops we’ve talked of that created the Grand Canyon, one drop at a time.

The difference here from our prior work is that instead of this awareness simply leading you to non-reactivity to that which has arisen, here we are going to release it, to cut the roots. We’ve stopped planting seeds, now we’re going to cut the roots of these old patterns.

There are many ways in which you can release it physically. Raise your hands; let it go. Breathe it out. Drop it. Put it in the fire and burn it. If that which we call God is real to you, offer it to God. Ask for help from those masters or gurus with whom you feel connection. Each of you has your own way of working. Each of you is unique. You are free to ask for help to release it, but you don’t need help. Just let it go. But, again, I remind you, **you are not getting rid of. There was nothing there to get rid of. Rather, you are freeing yourself of the delusion that there was something that needed to be gotten rid of.** In a real sense, what you are doing is less a “letting go” of the thought or emotion, than a letting go of **fixation** upon that thought or emotion, coming to a place where you can let it be.

These are the four steps. At first, you may wish to practice them in meditation. Soon, I hope, you will begin to apply them when tension arises in your life, when greed,

jealousy, impatience or anger arise. At first it will take you a few minutes. You will get faster at it. When I first taught Barbara this practice, I told her that eventually she should be able to do it in four or five seconds—one second for each part. And, indeed, she has learned to do so. That's in the future. For now, let it take as long as it needs, one step at a time.

We will not simply introduce this practice tonight and then be done with it. We will continue to work with it. We've worked with some of the stages of it. We'll work more with the other stages independently as well as bringing it together. In the future, I will teach you how to apply the same principle to recurrent physical distortions, such as a constant backache or migraine headache.

What you are doing here is practicing your perfection and wholeness instead of practicing the wrinkles, the distortions. I'm going to end here. I want to hear your questions specifically about this practice and then we will have a break first and then do a guided meditation with it. I thank you for your attention. That is all.

Questions

Question: Could you clarify the difference between steps three and four?

Barbara: The end of step two has given you a shift in awareness ... it's that juncture we've talked about of horizontal and vertical practice—relative and ultimate reality—coming into that space where we're balanced on two legs across an illusory threshold. When you find that balance between ultimate and relative reality, you allow yourself to see from the viewpoint of ultimate reality while embracing and not getting rid of relative reality. The relative is part of the ultimate. There can't be any separation between them.

From that space, step three involves seeing the human who's caught in this thought or emotion, perpetuating its energy. Step three involves the intention to release. We open our hearts compassionately to this human who's suffering with this situation. We see this is old mind conditioning; it has nothing to do with this present situation where this human is stuck in it, has been stuck for however long. We know, "I don't need to carry this anymore." The difference here is, in the past we've looked at the thought and found we can sever the identity with that. We don't have to be reactive to that situation. But we haven't allowed ourselves to release distorted energy. Each time that thought has arisen, there's been a contraction that goes with it. It's not the thought, so much as this contraction around the thought, which concerns us. We can choose to no longer perpetuate a relationship with the thought, which means noting and releasing the contraction.

Step four is the new step: releasing it. Instead of just being non-reactive to it, we say, "Take it out of the backpack and leave it. I don't need it anymore." This is part of the process of stabilizing pure heart/mind, stabilizing our resting in the pure light body, cutting identification with the distortions. Okay? (Yes.)

Question: Why are we adding this process to what we've already learned about mindfulness?

Barbara: Instead of just working more skillfully with the relative reality situation, not having to be reactive to what's arising in us, what we're doing is noting the ways that pain has caused us to put up barriers, to close our energy, to become "self." We make

the decision, "Not only do I not need to be reactive to this, but I really can let it go." We see it never was who we are, there was never a self feeling or doing this. We let go. There's no rush. If it stays, just watch it. When it's ready, it will go.

As Aaron said, it's the difference between merely not cultivating the plant so it drops new seeds and looking back at what are the roots of confusion? How can we start to cut the roots? Aaron's not going to get into the karmic side of this tonight. We'll talk about that in the future. But this is how we start to cut this old karma ... to not need to repeat these situations. We can go on forever with anger or fear or greed arising when certain conditions are present for their arising. We don't have to. We really can start to clarify that, while not with any getting rid of. Are there any questions?

Question: It feels as if what we are releasing is that moment's karma, or that little moment of jealousy or whatever emotion. We are not releasing the roots of it in this practice at this time. Is that what you are saying?

Barbara: It works its way down. After you've done it a certain number of times, you start to see that that surface of the root is connected all the way down there and, as you release that, the whole thing comes out.

Question: I feel like I'm doing some of this in my sleep.

Barbara: You meditate regularly and work with these practices mindfully during the day, so you probably are. Another thing that Aaron wants to get into further is lucid dreaming and working more with this practice in our sleep. We did some of this last year, but haven't continued it. At a long meditation retreat, sometimes people are only sleeping three or four hours a night and practice really goes on twenty-four hours a day. That happens less when we're busy doing things in our life and only meditating a short time each day. But probably all of you are doing it to some degree in your sleep.

Working in your sleep is powerful because when you know it's a dream, you know you're safe. You can watch defendedness arise and release it more easily. You lay a new foundation for how you'll respond to threat.

Aaron is saying that we will not be spending this much time with this every week. He wants to introduce this practice. He wants you to all take it home and work on it. He'd like us to have the tape transcribed as soon as possible and give it out to everybody who comes so that he won't have to repeat any of it. He wants this to be a foundation for our future work. He says some of that work is to move right back to mindfulness practice and dealing skillfully with what's arising in this moment, that we're not putting that aside in any way. We allow these two practices to support each other.

(Break.)

Barbara: We're going to do this meditation. Please remember there's no right or wrong way to do this. You're not trying to achieve something, not trying to get rid of anything. Whatever happens is okay. In the beginning when you do this at home, you might want to take longer to do it than we're going to take here. Or certain steps you may want to do longer, certain steps shorter. So, you'll each want to adapt it to your own needs. As Aaron pointed out, it's a process; once you learn the process, it becomes a very workable tool ... that you can bring it into your life and apply it each time there's the bit of contraction of fear, anger, jealousy or whatever there may be.

So, no getting rid of. Nothing to achieve. Nothing to grasp at. Nothing to be done. Nobody doing it. Just relaxing and being with whatever is, as we go through these four steps. Before we start, think of that emotion, that specific situation, that you want to work with tonight. It doesn't mean that that's what you'll work with continually; just think of some time in the past few days where there was some kind of contraction of wanting mind, greed, fear, whatever was arising, and especially something that you see is a recurrent pattern for you.

Meditation from Aaron

(Dots (...) denote short pauses.)

Begin with the breath ... simply noting the inhale and the exhale ... relax into the breath ...

Throughout this earth of yours beings are suffering ... not only humans, but sentient beings in all forms ... Begin by offering the intention that the work you do is to alleviate the suffering of all beings ... Allow this intention to inspire you and lend you courage and energy as you work ... I will be quiet for a few minutes while you do this ... *(long silence)*

As I previously noted, you have worked with many practices of outward expansion and the dissolution of boundaries. I am going to lead you here in one specific practice. If it does not fit you, feel free to silence my words and move in your own direction.

Inhale ... noting that the breath you draw in comes from beyond what you have considered your boundaries ... exhale ... sending the breath from within you out into the universe ... in ... out ... beyond the walls of this room ... beyond the atmosphere of the Earth ... *(long pause)*

Let awareness rest for a moment lightly on the body ... feel the skin that seems to define self ... As you breathe in, feel yourself also drawing in energy from the space around you ... as you breathe out, feel yourself releasing your energy ... not just the breath, but the energy ... you do not stop at your skin ... *(long pause)*

Breathing in ... breathing out ... allow yourself to expand outward ... With each in-breath, draw in the whole universe until it becomes too big to be contained in this skin ... with each exhalation, allow boundaries to dissolve and expand outward ...

You are not trying to expand outward, you are allowing the natural expression of your being ... which is a dissolution of self ... an expansion into the whole universe and beyond ... boundaries dissolving ... gentle allowing ... *(long pause)*

If there is any tension about this dissolving of boundaries, simply note it ... tension, tension ... and make space for it ... no judgment of that tension ...

If judgment arises, note that ... judging, judging, judging ... the arising of tension or judgment, or desire to hold to these boundaries for safety, have nothing to do with the reality of who you are ...

Allow yourself, as much as you are able, to move into that outward expansion ... into the pure mind and awareness of your true being ...

As you find that space, simply rest there ... breathing in and breathing out ... *(long pause)*

If conceptual mind returns, note it and let it go ...

Pure awareness ... turning in on itself ... pure awareness seeing how tension and the illusion of boundary arise and gain solidity ...

Pure awareness touching with compassion the human who keeps getting caught in this delusion of separation ... *(pause)*

Look at this human as if you had not seen him or her before ... a new being ... the way you very occasionally catch yourself in a mirror, and see yourself in an unaccustomed way ...

See this human experiencing desire ... aversion ... impatience ... jealousy ... the need to control ... to protect itself ...

See with clarity how that emotion is a manifestation of old conditioning ... that from this higher awareness there is nothing to be afraid of ... nothing to protect or defend from ...

Can you look with tenderness and loving-kindness on this human ... who has gotten caught in this pattern over and over and over ... and whose bewilderment and aversion to its pain has solidified that particular emotion ... and led it to plant new karmic seeds ... led it to new reactivity ...

Can pure awareness see all this and embrace this human? ... *(long pause)*

What is this fear ... jealousy ... greed ... anger ... need to defend? ... To whom does it belong? ...

Pure awareness sees with clarity that it does not own this emotion ... it sees how it arises and how it may pass away ... it sees how it has been packed up in a backpack and carted from situation to situation ...

Allow this human to rest in the spaciousness of pure awareness ... allow the heart to open ... to be touched with compassion for this human that has so often been judged ... *(long pause)*

The human has been practicing that distortion ... either through the repetition of it or through aversion to it ... the attempt at self-discipline to pull away from it ... just a different practice of it ...

Seeing how it has arisen from old mind conditioning ... and that it need not be carried into this moment ... notice the intention to release it ... look to see, is there any getting-rid-of ... If there is that aversion that creates desire to be rid of, can you open your heart enough to make space also for that aversion ... releasing the emotion and the aversion ... *(pause)*

Pure awareness touching this human with love ... pure awareness releasing the burden of so many lifetimes ... let it go ... whatever this energy was, there is no "mine" to it ... I do not need to continue to own it and carry it around ... I let it go ... no getting-rid-of, but the beginning of understanding that it never existed in the first place except in the mind ...

If it does not wish to go, let it stay ... just watch it ... when it's ready it will go ... you release a bird ... you open your hand so it may fly away ... you don't push it off your hand ... only release ... it will go when it's ready ... *(long pause)*

Now please begin to draw awareness back into the body ... come back to the breath ... to the weight of the body on the buttocks ... the physical sensations of the body ... back to the inhalation and the exhalation ... re-balancing ... drawing back into this relative reality through which you experience the world ... *(pause)*

May all beings everywhere find freedom from the suffering grown out of delusion and ignorance ... (Bell.)

May all beings come to rest in their true nature, to know themselves as non-separate, to open their hearts to themselves and all that is ... (Bell.)

May all beings everywhere find perfect peace ... (Bell.)

Discussion

Q: At the end of the meditation, Aaron was helping us to ground ourselves. I understand that. But, is there anything wrong with maintaining the level of awareness we had at the moment as we move home and into our week? I had the feeling that Aaron was saying to come back into our bodies. Be here. I didn't want to. I wanted to stay in awareness of both parts. And I'm wondering if there's any problem with that.

Barbara: There's no problem with it. No matter how hard we try, we can't stay in that ultimate awareness. But we can know when we're not in it. When we forget that ultimate level of awareness and starting to get caught in our identity as "me" ... when we see that "I'm thinking I'm 'me' again," then we can remind ourselves to re-balance. But is there aversion to re-entering the human awareness with all its delusion? His regrounding us is a way of reminding us not to deny the human with its illusory wrinkles.

Q: This afternoon, you were in a place of ungroundedness. Is there anything to be aware of? I think Aaron understands my question.

Aaron: I am Aaron. Barbara's ungroundedness this afternoon resulted from her having been channeling from a deeper than usual trance state and needing to ease back into balance. In that trance state, she experiences total dissolution of body and ego.

When you are doing this practice, there is a place of shift of perception, an awareness that perception shifts as if weight were shifting from the one foot that's in relative reality to the other foot that's in ultimate reality. In the long run, weight must be balanced on both feet. One learns that relative and ultimate are not separate. As long as you see them as separate, you dwell in your pain and start to think, "There's this other place out there that I can grab hold of. I can move from samsara to nirvana. I can move from hell to heaven." But they are part of each other.

Now you are balancing because you do not yet intimately understand that they're part of each other. Your intellect understands it, but there's not yet firm experiential understanding. As you work with this practice, it will help to draw the two together. Ultimately there is no balancing because there is no duality.

About opening and closing, consider the example I gave of Barbara's swimming and the people who were jumping on top of her and kicking her from underneath, simply being very careless in their play. Each time she experienced some painful contact from them, the boundaries came up, anger arose. She'd turn at the end of the pool and swim back the other way, noting how that anger had arisen, noting that it was simply old mind. She needed to physically defend herself by being aware and not swimming into their jumping and diving, but the anger was really not part of it. It didn't take her long—one length of the pool and back. As she came back, she was open again. Then

they'd jump on her again and the anger would arise again. You keep working with this balance, continually.

The difference here—and I think this is what your question is about—is that working with it continually is what you've all been doing. The new practice is the release. Instead of carrying it with you down to the other end of the pool, you know in that moment, "I do not need to carry this any further. It's old mind." To do that for now, attention must be resting very stably in Pure Awareness, in pure heart/mind—ultimate reality, light body, higher self, whatever you wish to call it.

This is not to differentiate that pure heart/mind as something separate from, only to bring in that aspect of awareness which is usually not fully entered. In a sense, what we're doing is shifting weight back and forth more firmly than one ordinarily would as preparatory to learning to set both feet stably, united, on the ground. First you understand **how** it feels to rest in ultimate versus relative reality. Then you begin to understand that both feet can carry the weight simultaneously. Does that answer your question?

Q: It clarified my question. I experienced this very, very strongly tonight, and I am carrying a very high level of vibration which is very pleasant and a little frightening. Is it okay to go home carrying this level of vibration, or do I need to do something to ground myself first?

Barbara: Simply know that you're carrying that high level of vibration. That's all you need to do: be aware of it. Is there wanting to hold onto it? To recreate it. Is there aversion to the more usual feelings of the illusory self?

Q: A little.

Barbara: What happens to the vibration when you notice attachment to it? Just look.

Deep Spring Publications

NEWSLETTER

Deep Spring Center for Meditation and Spiritual Inquiry Newsletter: 8 ½ x 11, stapled, 20 pages

The newsletter, published three times a year, is offered on a donation basis. Our cost to print and mail this to you is \$7/year (\$10 Canadian).

BOOKS

We offer books at our cost, including mailing. All our books are 8 ½ x 11 and Cerlox bound.

Aaron: 1995 expanded edition, 123 pages. Includes many new chapters and a new format. \$10 (\$14 Canadian)

This is a basic book of Aaron's teachings, with selections taken from the most frequently asked questions: Who are we? Why are we incarnate? How can we best do the work we came to do? How can we live our lives with more wisdom and love?

Christmas Stories, A Collection of Memories from Aaron: Newly updated, 97 pages. \$6 (\$8 Canadian)

Aaron's inspiring memories from the past life in which he was a "simple shepherd" who knew and loved that teacher we call Jesus. Each year at Christmas Aaron has shared memories with us as "teaching stories."

No Chain at All: 150 pages. \$12 (\$15 Canadian)

This is very much the heart of what Aaron's been teaching. While you can just read through it, the book is really a workbook which invites your participation. To quote Aaron, *"I find the expression of this law of dependent origination to be one of Buddhism's most valuable contributions to the planet. It is called 'The Chain of Becoming.' Teachings speak of the way we have each become caught in this chain, moving blindly from one incarnation to another, never able to find freedom from suffering. This is real, on one plane. Yet on another level, there is no **chain at all**, nor has there ever been. You are free. You have always been free. In the coming months we will explore these truths and come to see that they are not contradictory ..."*

The Path of Natural Light, Parts 1 and 2: Part 1, 224 pages. Part 2, 230 pages. \$14 each part (\$20 Canadian)

These are **complete** transcripts of the 1993-1994 Wednesday night classes on relative versus ultimate reality, and light/energy work. From the book: *"I see our work then as finding that balance between relative and ultimate—the horizontal plane of healing and the vertical plane of knowing there was never anybody that needed to heal. With wisdom and pure awareness, that sense of self dissolves ... the whole notion of fragmentation was an illusion, but it is the illusion of the relative reality, and the suffering*

within that illusion must be attended. The human manifestation needs healing ... In past months we have been discussing the light body, the perfect, unwrinkled sheet of paper, the illusory wrinkles and how the physical, emotional and mental bodies reflect those wrinkles ... We move ahead with this caution: what I teach is not escape from your humanness, but deeper embracing of that humanness, wrinkles and all ... again, I remind you, you are not getting rid of. There was nothing there to get rid of. Rather, you are freeing yourself of the delusion that there was something that needed to be gotten rid of."

Seven Days: A Journey Into Awareness, Days One to Three, Part One: 105 pages. \$9 (\$12 Canadian)

There have been many requests for a book from Aaron about meditation. This book offers in-depth material on meditation practice with specific "how to" instruction. In November 1996, Barbara and Aaron offered a three day workshop/retreat in Mexico City. In April 1997 they returned to lead a four day silent residential meditation retreat. This book contains the transcripts of all of the talks and instruction, offered by both Aaron and Barbara, during the first three of those seven days. The first days deal more with spiritual inquiry and basic instruction in vipassana or insight meditation. There is a progressive deepening of instruction. There is also considerable discussion of working with heavy emotions and the various painful catalysts of our lives, with specific instruction offered for meditation with heavy mind states, resistance, restlessness, physical pain and other difficult states of mind and body. "Days One to Three" is the November workshop. "Days Three to Seven," the April retreat, will be available later.

The Awakened Heart: 147 pages. \$12 (\$15 Canadian)

Approximately 1300 years ago, the Buddhist Indian monk/poet Shantideva wrote "The Way of the Bodhisattva," elucidating an important part of the Buddhist path. "The Awakened Heart" is not commentary on the poem, but uses it as background. In Aaron's words: *"For many years you have heard me talk about making space for the heavy emotions. A primary emphasis of my teaching has been that it is not bad to feel emotions, that when certain conditions are present, certain emotions will arise ... I teach people to make more space around the emotion ... If you don't want those emotions to arise you must begin to look deeply at the conditions out of which they arise, primarily the conditions of fear, of the illusion of separation—separation from other beings, separation from the divine ... Through a series of practices and exercises, one could more deeply open to that highest aspect of the self which does not choose to invite in the conditions which give rise to such painful emotion. This is not a 'getting rid of' anything, rather we note that side by side there is the tense and frightened human and there is the innately loving, open-hearted human. You have a choice: you can enact your fear or you can choose to note your fear, to observe that the loving Awakened Heart is always present, to nurture it, and to enact that loving heart. You always have a choice."*