

ENLIGHTENMENT NEWSLETTER

SELF & OTHER

Volume 4 ☉ Number 1

First Half ☉ 1996

What is Death?

Edrid

As an Enlightenment Intensive master, I try not to cloud the picture by introducing a bunch of new questions for people to work on at Intensives. There are certain questions which are at the root of life. These are self, life, and another. These are core questions and I respect them.

We work on **self** because self is so central. Who gets enlightened? What is my true nature? There is absoluteness to self because YOU get enlightened. You realize yourself yourself. The process causes us to shed all sorts of identifications, things with which we have confused ourselves. As each identity is peeled away, the mind is made clear and your awareness of the one who you really are becomes ever more simple, basic, and apparent. At some point, there are no identities left. ALL that was the self is gone, no substitutes remain. Only the actual self remains—not seen, but realized, and presented live and authentic to life. I am! I am!

We work on **life** because we wake up into this vast and complex arena without a clue. It's all here, but what is it? Why is there something rather than nothing? What are mass, energy, space, time, matter, mind? What is life's nature and purpose? What is my relationship to all this? What is THIS MOMENT, this HERE and this NOW? We grope for it, get overwhelmed at the magnitude, it becomes slippery—where did life go? There is nothing to experience but life, and yet I can't seem to grasp it! Over and over again we touch it and it slips away. Layer upon layer of the mental overlay dissolves. The mind projects "life" on ... on what? Concentration deepens and we give up viewing, reasoning, feeling. There is just this absolute contact with life itself, without layer upon layer of indirect perception. We come home, the separation evaporates; it was illusion anyway.

Only the actual, THIS, remains. Our intrinsic union with all of it becomes conscious.

We work on **another**. It starts out with trying to solve the problems with how to get along with others, to treat them well, to tolerate their behavior, to find completion in relationship. Loneliness, rejection, showing off, misunderstanding, companionship, sex, contact—it goes on and on. We see just how much we are entangled with others. Where do I end and the others begin? Is it all projection? Is there actually another or is it all a solipsistic dream? And how they affect us! We do everything to please them, impress them, escape them, solicit their love. It goes on and on and on. And the feelings! It can get really heavy. How much I care for you, how I long to make intimate contact with you, to understand, to love, to communicate, really communicate. Layer upon layer dissolves as the "object" of contemplation clears up. We become more accurate, more aligned to the truth of another. All the projections are eventually discarded—all of them. Others are not the ideas I have of them. They are not the feelings I have for them. They are not these things in my mind, body, and physical world. Where is the other? What is another? We slowly awaken to the actual other. No mind, no body, no material world, this other. We don't confuse them with life—there's just the divine being, absolute, a nothing nothing nothing, everything everything everything.

We could stop here. Self, life, other—a good set of questions. Just take these three deeper until we are grounded deeply in truth. Just send down those deep roots and life becomes balanced, right, appropriate, tolerable. Actually, we find that putting all this truth into life is the real challenge. An Intensive, once thought to be really hard and "Wow, I made it through!" is a piece of cake compared with the real task: taking truth into your life and living it. That's where the real drama

begins, because the weight of the mass consciousness, the collective dream, is more than our lightweight enlightenment can stand. Inside of two weeks, maybe four, maybe a year, but at some point, we are overwhelmed by the habit mind, by our desire for connection with this culture, with a larger body of individuals. We must work in the real world, have real relationships with people who are not constrained with the rules of the Intensive, who don't listen, who interrupt, who lay trips, who don't seem to care, who are distracted and who distract you. Without a really deep, deep enlightenment, we succumb to Maya, the illusion.

Briefly seeing through the illusion during an Intensive gives us a taste of truth. The Intensive, once seen as a grueling difficult austere grind seems like a heaven compared to the messed up mess we must face afterwards in our everyday lives. Once so closely listened to, we feel the agony of not having our mate or close friend really listen. Maybe they just try to argue. Trip-laying, once seeming to be normal human interaction, may now seem like a terrible affront. To have someone really listen and understand you—when does it actually happen?

Without some love in your heart, which begets patience and tolerance, one who has tasted a little enlightenment can either get really critical of others, can get "holier than thou," or get really introverted and pull away. It's all just TOO much. Love, cultivated and allowed to flow naturally, smoothes the path one takes after the Intensive. Love is the lubricant that keeps the path from chafing. But it can go well beyond that. Work on "What is love?" in an Intensive and realize that there is much more to it than just the feelings, the flows, and the practical effect it has in our lives. Remember "God is love"? The love question goes deeper than we thought. It opens us up to self, life, and another in ways we did not dream of. It opens us to a basic truth about life itself, to the universal urge that is at the heart of every act and event. Love is very basic. A friend, after working on love in an Intensive, remarked, "There is more love than matter in the universe."

The love question is not quite in the same domain as self, life, and another. Self, life, and another are right there in front of us, obviously a basic observable architecture of conscious life. Love, the subject of most songs, literature, poetry, and movies, is overlaid with tons of cultural baggage. But what is it really? Pursued as an Enlightenment

Editor's Column

This marks the beginning of the 4th year for Self & Other. If I had kept up with my publishing schedule, that would mean I had published a dozen issues. Alas, I could not keep that up. Just too much work keeping family and business together. Nevertheless, I am still eager to continue and I appreciate you all being tolerant of my erratic publishing schedule. And thank you all who have contributed articles, stories, accounts of enlightenments, poetry, and financial support. I like what's in Self & Other. Its a cool newsletter. I like it because it feels real to me. I like it because it talks about what is dear to me. There are only a few publications that try to deal with life and enlightenment so directly.

Two participants tried out "What is death?" at the Mount Baldy Intensive. I'm open to a few (experienced) people experimenting with that question on Intensives I master. From these early results, I think it is worth pursuing. I'll keep you informed.

I usually shy away from literary pieces when they are submitted. But a number of people have sent in excellent pieces that illustrate something they discovered along the way. It's another way of communicating an experience. So next issue, there will be some fictional pieces that are from the heart, from a true experience, and communicate enlightenment or realization in one way or another. If you want to send something of this nature, please do so. I can't guarantee that we'll publish all of them, but we'll give it a try.

Of course, accounts of enlightenment experiences or spiritual experiences are still the core of this newsletter. That, and useful information about the Enlightenment Intensive process and similar activities. Please send in your experiences to share with our community.

Want to find out what Intensive and other events are coming up? Look at the Self & Other Web site. Its Internet address is <http://www.sandoth.com>. Just click on the jump to the Intensive information link. If you have email access, you can write me at sao@sandoth.com.

Intensive question, love emerges as a key aspect of all sentience and of all form. And, the result of enlightenment on what love is is that one's life is immediately better. You just love. That is basic to your relationship to all others, to all of life. You may not like the impurities in other's minds, you may not like what they do, you may wish they would understand you as you really are, but you love them. You always have. Enlightenment on love opens you to the love that has always existed. And you love the floor and the walls, hubcaps, credit cards, everything. You love all otherness, even the things that you identify with in your own mind. You love your self, the "other" part of "you." And you don't have to force any of it. You always did love. It was just covered up. In fact, its not so much "you love" as "love is."

So we added the love question to the Intensive—or some masters did. Some, harkening to the warning of the founder, Yogeshwar Muni/Charles Berner, keep just to the original set of four questions (Who am I?, What am I?, What is life?, What is another?). I've approached adding a new question very cautiously. I don't want to contaminate the Intensive process. The Intensive is a very pure practice, world-class and deserving of respect. It is right up there with Zazen, Vipassana, and other refined contemplative arts. I'm not about to muck it up. But I watched the love question for maybe ten years and saw what happened when people got some enlightenment on love, and one day, it just hit me. Oh! Oh! Love! Of course! And now I don't have a whisper of doubt about it.

Then, later, I had friends over on Wednesday nights for dyads. (This was about 5 years ago.) I suggested to Steve Cavin that we work on "What is death" together in our dyads. Personally, I had been working on confronting death as a reality. It had just come up for me and I found I was curious and didn't want to be in such complete denial of it all the time. Years before, I had read about the Samurai practice of being completely willing to die at every moment. Utterly fearless at every moment. That seemed utterly alien to me. I read about proud nobles committing *seppuku* during Japanese medieval period (1550 - 1650 or so). Rikyu, the great tea master, of whom I have great respect, had committed seppuku to hold up the honor of his daughter when the wild, brazen Shogun Hideoshi demanded that Rikyu give her to him to be his wife. Etc. etc. It made my head spin to imagine someone kneeling down with a sharp dagger and cutting out his or her guts and

DYING to uphold honor in the family. Later, while walking down the street in Menlo Park, contemplating death, I "fell" through a black hole in the sidewalk into Hell. Like those depictions of Hell you see in medieval paintings, or listed in the Buddhist Sutra of the Earth Store Bodhisattva—tearing metal, tortured shrieks, stab wounds, having your tongue torn out (or "plowed"), fire and brimstone, and so on. Utter horror! I snapped back in my body with a ka-bam!, startled and shaken. Death! Wow! There is something there to understand, that's for sure. I had lots of such contemplations during that period.

While traveling in Bali in the early '80's, I learned about this centarian (I forget his name now) who was perhaps the most venerated and respected sagely person in Bali, like the national guru. I saw him in a film interview and he said, "You can live your life so that you will know how to die." This, coming from such a beloved teacher, and spoken with such great conviction, transmitted something to me. I got it. Death puts meaning into your life. I felt there was much about death I should know, and I needed to work on it in some way until I reached some completion on it.

Then a dear old friend, Ken Fry, called up and said that Buddha said "What is death?" is just about the best enlightenment question to work on. Also, Ken said, Maezumi Roshi, a well-respected master of Zen, recommended it. This, with Ken's urging, was just enough support for me to entertain offering it to a few Intensive participants. Not for just anyone—you had to be really interested and have taken enough Intensives to know about how they work, and you had to take responsibility for what happened. I wasn't selling anything, and I didn't want to hurt anyone. We joked about it: did you have to die to directly experience death? This would be hard to explain to the relatives.

One participant in the 16th Annual worked on it and she said afterwards, "There is no separation between life and death." I watched her work during the dyads and I realized that we already know what death is. Totally. It's all right here. We just have to get down to it.

At the Mount Baldy Intensive two people worked on death, and one, the venerable Ken Fry, attained a state of immortality. Well, not immortality really, because no one is saying his body won't die eventually. But he has the conviction that HE does not die. He goes on. This has left him without any fear of death, and without any fear of how life will

turn out. He has forever to work it all out. He said to me, "How would you define enlightenment?" I responded with something pretty lame, and he replied, "Well, for me it's knowing you never die." This left quite an impression on me.

I tend to be pretty conservative, so I'm not about to rush into "What is death" at Intensives. I try to avoid making assumptions about what will benefit people. I want to experiment more with it and see if it really helps people. I will watch to see if people are really helped, in their own estimation and in mine. And then, if it proves to be as powerful as it seems from these early trials, I will embrace it just like I did the Love question. If not, if it is just a flash in the pan, I will move on. Time will tell.

The Big Fake-Out

by Ken Fry

Death is the spice of life -- the reason for living -- the ending that makes a life meaningful. Whether it is a good life, a bad one, or mediocre, we come to our just reward -- justified by ourselves. The term "Grateful Dead" makes sense.

Recently I thought a good intensive question might be "What is Death?" Friends rejected the idea. I tried to abandon it, but it would not relent. I found a book about Death and Dying by Philip Kapleau, author of *Three Pillars of Zen*. Citations indicated "Death?" was, indeed, a highly respected and rather fine meditation. Additional research discovered similar opinions. I discussed it with Ed Riddle. He later reported someone used that question and was pleased with the results. I resolved to try it at his next intensive.

Thinking continued. I thought, "There's nothing to it." Death is an event, not a suitable 'object' of contemplation. There's nothing to learn. I decided to go for it anyway.

At the Mount Baldy Zen Center, with Ed's agreement, I did it.

The first day, nothing happened until the afternoon. Then, I had an insight -- "Death is an illusion." No surprise, I'd thought that before the intensive, but now it was more real.

I consulted the master. Perhaps this was all of it. Perhaps not. I wavered, but I knew what was right. I carried on.

The next morning, I arose full of ambition, energy and interest. There was more. It was quickening. I know the stages you go through with a question -- this was normal.

Late morning, the second day, life, and death became far more interesting. Something occurred, that thing that occurs -- from time to time -- that thing that intensifies the meaning of my life, this life. Then, the world is different. I know, I am home, I am who I am. All is right with the world. It seemed I could tell the difference between temporal, organic life, and . . . transcendent consciousness.

The body, with which I am so exquisitely, intimately identified, love it that I might, the fat ugly slow thing it is, it dies. The end of that life; that personhood, that name, those relationships -- a child, a sibling, a spouse, a parent, the end of all that, that is the end of this life. That is death. All those things I like about myself, and those things I don't, all the things that tell me who I am, the roles, the identities -- gone -- all gone, all dead, all over -- forever.

What a pleasant surprise: something isn't dead. I'm still who I am, and I have lifetimes of work ahead, but I got work.

Doing "What are You?" at another intensive, I had a flash that seemed like a prior death. It was the flash of realization, "Wow, that's my body! It's dead, but, . . ." It's like jumping out of the hot tub and rolling in the snow. It gets your attention.

With the earlier experience at hand, I used it. It was like "What Am I?" from the other side of the looking glass. It is effectively the question "What am I outside of life?"

The second afternoon, I got hot on "all is illusion." Life was illusory. Death was illusory. Was there more?

Near the Zendo are a few acres covered with large rocks, shards of a fallen granite mountain. I watched these rocks every day, during walking meditations, morning and evening, a massive storage of the energy of the physical world. I fell into the vision of these boulders, the shards of the mountain as the illusion, smashed to bits, laying there before me. I threw rocks, smashing the illusion with each one. With each I cried, "Get thee behind me Satan!" (I love to wax biblical.). The lure of the illusion is seductive, so fully desirable. I reveled in a brief view beyond the veil. Each stone I threw empowered my vision of

separation from the cycle of birth and death. Every attachment I had to life fell into relief. I am not the illusion. I use it. I hope this vision will grow.

"What Am I?" is an inclusive question. It's easy to invest a great deal of time with the effective question being, "What am I identified with?" The question works fine, but it's slow. Broad, but slow. It's like moving a mountain with a teaspoon. Asking, "What is death?" is like using a jackhammer.

"Life?", "Other?" have the same drawback.

"What is Death?" throws all of life into relief, as in looking at a photographic negative rather than a print, or seeing a sculpture, rather than a photo. "I am a (bricklayer)" is a seductive and, at some level, legitimate answer to "What are you?" In life, in this life, it's true, you are a (bricklayer). Life is sweet -- we dare not let it go too easily. We polish and polish these questions, getting every nuance.

Life is that complex of ideas, thoughts, roles, relationships, titles, names, all those things it seems to you that you are. But if you ask "What is Death?" everything that is life is automatically eliminated from consideration. Only that which is left when life is over, is subject to the inquiry.

That night, when I retired, sleep would not come. I was fraught with visions of my own death. As in, right now, right here, this instant. What would that be like, really? Really!

I was devastated. I could give up most of it, my education, roles, names, being smart, being clever -- that was a loss, but the loss of my family, my sons -- that was devastating.

Nevertheless, in good form, I threw myself into the breach. The way out was through.

I realized it really didn't matter very much if I died. I would miss my loved ones and they me. But life would go on without me. This is a "What am I" experience. I kept having brief recollections of past deaths and re-experiencing the moment when I'd realize, "Holy Cripes! I'm not dead! That body there, it's dead, but 'I'm' not!" (so to speak).

The third day, it got even better. I got the sense that "it's us, all together" that keeps the "illusion" going. It's not a charade. It's the United Nations with a zillion members. This is a "What is Life?" experience. I am sure there is more. I expect a "What is Another?" experience follows, then

perhaps an experience of universal (or unitary) consciousness. Or maybe, that is the "What is Another?" experience.

Death is the big fake out, the grand illusion, the thing I feared, with nothing to fear at all. It's a vacation, a recharging, a new start. Death is passing Go and collecting \$200. Death is a grand and a wonderful thing. We live our lives, each one of them, like beads on a string. When we've learned what we can from one life, we cast it off like an old shoe, and take another. It organizes life into discrete, manageable, comprehensible units. It also means death is no escape from responsibility for life. "What is Death?" sounds like a scary question, and it is. Fear is one of the major barriers. For me, fear has been a substantial factor in many of my decisions. I felt the fear, let it be there and went on anyway. and it has faded. In its place is a sense of calm, an enhanced sense of the wonder of the everyday world.

I plan to continue the question at another intensive. I suspect most anyone who has done a few Intensives might profit from it and enjoy it as much as I have. I never kept count, but I've been to a few Intensives over the last thirty years or so. This one was the easiest, the most fun, and the most rewarding of all.

The White Cat

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A long-haired white cat looks at me from a basket on top of the bookcase that is against the wall across from the foot of my bed. Raggle Taggle has synthetic fur, and his green eyes and pink nose are made of plastic, but this is not what I see. He arrived during the week I was unconscious in the Intensive Care Unit at the local hospital. When I awoke, I hung onto that cat as if my life depended on it.

White cats remind me, "I am!" This memory had been recorded fifteen years previous as a result of contemplating "Who am I?" On the second eighteen-hour day I struggled to sit up, to keep my eyes open, to focus my attention. I saw cats, sometimes real like the ones I met on the street during walking meditation, but mostly "imagined" in that they did not exist in the physical world. A white cat came into my consciousness, grew larger and brighter, and burst into light.. All that existed was light. My body was thrown upward and arched back—as if an

explosion had opened it. My breathing changed. I knew, "I am."

Just this side of death, "I am" was all I had. I could not lie down, sleep, eat, think, or move without assistance. All I wanted was to be able to live an ordinary life. I longed to go home and give my real cats a squeeze. But for the next month, I remained at the hospital, and eventually took up permanent residence in a reclining chair. During the day, I looked out the window at the vineyard-covered hills and the changing sky of the rainy season. I listened to the birds, the rain, and the wind. Through the endless nights, I watched the clock.

I was still alive! I hung onto the cat. I hung onto life. I hung on to "I am," the only thing that made sense was to "hang on to" the light in someone's eyes, their words, or their hand. Each person was a rediscovered treasure that I might never have known again; each person was precious to me. As I clutched the white cat, sparks of recognition and appreciation passed between me and others—a communion of "I am."

The Day I Ended the Kali Yuga

Spiritual Ravings on the Third Day, by Edrid

Edda and I were sitting on rocks in the road just outside the meditation hall at the Mt. Baldy Zen Center. It was warm enough to be not cold, pleasant with a little nip, and the surging winds in the pine trees gave the atmosphere a kind of electric alive quality. Mt. Baldy is never actually quiet. It breathes, sighs, shakes, and shudders, while the big mountain across the valley just keeps going down and down like a big heavy gravity thing, radiating solid presence.

Edda and I were talking quietly during a walking meditation. Both of us were filled up really full of the clear juice of truth, brimming kind of, wet at the eyes and in Love with the Divine. We were talking to each other about what we were seeing at the Intensive. She was describing how truth was just lying there on the participants, like it had just landed on us all. I saw it too. It was a big transparent flying saucer that had landed gently right on us and our molecules had gotten infused with its molecules until we were all joined in some living, pliable structure—a big spacy invisible cat-spaceship plopped right on top of us and in us and all through us—just a big soup of truth.

I started talking, how I was through with separating God into pieces. I am willing to have it

all be just one thing. Good - bad, right - wrong, it didn't matter, I accept the whole thing. No part of God is not God. No parts to God. All is completely accepted at this moment. OK. Life, Self, Other, whatever, it is all THIS and THIS IS and that's IT. Period. I will NOT avoid the fullness of the Divine. And then it hit me, clear as a bell. I ended the Kali Yuga. Personally, by accepting it all, as is, a great turning of the flow was made. The *Dharma Ending Age* was over. The Kali Yuga had been ended at that moment with a vow. I didn't know if it ended for everyone or just for me, but a cycle was complete.

I was quite fervently, quietly telling this to Edda. She has this smile, and her eyes, I can't quite describe them, very present yet gone, yielding, evoking. Looking right at me and smiling she said, "It's like Rumi said - 'A couple of drunks.'"

"Your eyes, now drunk with God, mine with looking at you, one drunkard takes care of another."

Rumi, from "Open Secret"

An Enlightenment Experience

By Lynn Levine

I have never been to an Enlightenment Intensive, and perhaps because of life circumstances, I never will. My friend, Nishkala, told me about Self and Other. I was very interested, since the questions contemplated at these events are questions that I've been asking for many years. I received my first periodicals and I appreciate them so much, that I'd like to share a couple of experiences that I've had, with the hope that I can shed a little light, like you all have for me.

About twenty-three years ago, after having traveled around for a few years as a flower-child, I returned to my parents' home. To put it bluntly, my world and theirs were miles and miles apart, and I spent a great deal of time in my room. My mission was to find Truth, follow Love, and make actual contact with God.

Although most people would consider this an impossible, and maybe somewhat insane goal, I nonetheless was focused on finding the beautiful world, and the all-loving God that I had faith existed within and beyond the material world. At that time, I had a somewhat untrained form of meditation (though I had been initiated in transcendental meditation). I knew that Truth lay somewhere outside the confines of my conceptual mind, but I was a virtual beginner, and without a

teacher, I had only my own mind with which to investigate. I had the inspiration of Zen books, the "Be Here Now" of Baba Ram Dass, but other than that, my path was a very nebulous, trial and error kind of thing. I learned to use dreams as a tool for guidance, inner voices as teachers, and I spent much time just sitting and searching within, stubbornly insisting to myself that God certainly could communicate to a human being, (being omnipresent and all!) even if that human being wasn't Moses!

At this time, my mind was torn between two worlds: the psychological one and the spiritual one. I had a lot of problems with loneliness and the constant inner chatter of very strong conditioning. Although I had found a freedom in my travels, and insight through dreams, drugs, and meditation, still I couldn't find an answer that would free me from the chains of my negative thought patterns.

One day, in the midst of my mental wandering, as I watched the circles of my thoughts relentlessly appear and disappear, not able to rest on any final definition or understanding, I had a life-changing perception.

"The nature of thoughts is constant motion, constant change," I said to myself. How could I ever expect Truth to be found within the parameters of thought? How could I find the Unchanging within words and concepts that were constantly appearing and disappearing? I saw that the only constant was the "space between my thoughts" and I made the decision that from that moment on I would act from this space, feel this space, and allow the clamor of my thoughts, though deeply ingrained in me, to flow by without my following and building on any one of them. I made this decision, and a miraculous thing happened! The whole room turned bright, I could suddenly see the living reality of God everywhere I looked; I could even see His living Essence in the walls (or more correctly, AS the walls), I saw that every single thing, EVERYTHING was made of consciousness. It was a beautiful sight, and a sacred validation that my decision was correct. I then SAW that everything, all of time, was in my own mind, and within me was my path to enlightenment—all my dreams, all my needs, all my fate, were actually just exactly as I felt them in my consciousness. I was real! And so was God.

Later that day, as I was driving, I saw a big Eye in the sky—a real eye. I thought, "God's eye looking in at the world." It was a calm feeling, a natural

event, a happy, magic day—and an image I'll never forget. My one sorrow was that I was experiencing this alone.

That day was a new beginning. Since then, the Light has been getting slowly brighter in my life. Teachers have appeared, and my steps have become more focused, and more sure. It all began with the recognition of the need for inner work, and an act of will. But no matter what, I'll never forget, because of the memory of that day, that the Truth is Sublime, that it is Love, it is Light, it's real!

Holding Jello in Your Fingers.

By Edrid

This is a spiritual practice that steadies the mind so that you can give up thought for long enough to mix completely with absolute reality, or its luminous ground state at least.

Stare at the air right in front of you, suspending any speculative thought or mental words in your head. Stop the inner discourse and do not intend to communicate anything to anyone for a little while. Do the best you can without thinking about how well you are doing.

Stare at the air until you can see it as a luminous palpable substance. It looks like clear Jello. It has a solidity, a presence. It doesn't take too long to get this going.

You're sitting, cross-legged, back straight, etc., staring at air that looks like Jello. With your hand (one of them) reach out and ever-so-gently pinch the Jello between your thumb and forefinger (pointer finger). Hold it very gently so it's not like a pinch to tweak someone's behind or tease. It's like holding something that is very sensitive. Do this sssllloowwwlllyyy. Thumb and forefinger come together very slowly, like trying to catch something very light that would slip away if you moved too fast.

Hold the Jello very still. This Jello is filling all the space around you and goes right through your body. Your molecules (your body's and your mind's) and its are the same ones. If you hold the Jello very still, your mind is held very still. Move the Jello and your mind moves.

So just hold the Jello very still for a little while and that holds your mind very still. (You can kind of see faint lines or planes from your joined fingers go right into your head or heart, making a connection.) Your consciousness, held still in this

manner, is like an empty field, balanced and poised. You know how, when you throw a ball straight up, it is weightless at the top? Like that.

So just hold the Jello still and be conscious, present.

That's the "Holding Jello in Your Fingers Meditation." I hope you enjoy it.

Lucerne Valley, Revisited

Osha Reader, May, 1996

To my old friends from the desert.

April 27, I'd just completed a ten-day meditation retreat in Joshua Tree, CA, and decided to drive home by way of Lucerne Valley and look for the old Institute of Ability property. I'd first arrived there as a new student in September, 1969, a month or so after taking my first Enlightenment Intensive. I'd seen the property for the last time in March, 1971. Hard to believe 25 years have passed!

Things looked different as I drove up from the south on Hwy. 247. A lot of roads headed into the mountains. How to find the right one! I pulled into the center of Lucerne Valley, turned left on Crystal Creek Road and headed up towards the granite factory. It was Saturday, a little after noon. The factory seemed deserted and everything was covered with white dust. I'd seen no signs of life since leaving the main road about seven miles back. I was sure I'd taken a wrong turn and decided I'd better turn around, but said to myself, "Just a little bit further!" The pavement ended just past the factory and I thought, "Now my car's going to fill up with dust! It could have been any of these roads. Forget this!" But I continued on anyway. About half a mile past the factory, a driveway turned off to the right. There was a padlocked gate with boards nailed across and a sign that said, "For sale by Thompson Brothers." Another one said, "Private Property! Mine traffic only." The main road continued up the mountain, making deep criss-cross cuts that could be seen for miles away. I pulled off, parked my car and, slipping between two boards in the gate, walked gingerly up the drive.

After ten days of meditation, I was feeling quite awake; combined with the excitement of trespassing and the prospect of encountering who knows what kind of scary person, all my senses were on full alert. There were large cacti

everywhere and bunches of lupine and yellow desert flowers.

I saw the peak of a house that was almost surely the old seminary building. The roof was missing shingles. There was a broken window upstairs and the remains of a porch below. I looked for Charles and Ava's house, but remembered it had burnt down. I continued up the road and around to the left, where the outhouse had been. There were some old pieces of boards lying in the dirt. Everything was quite still in the midday sun; not a breath of wind, not even an ant! I turned and saw the hill we used to run up for breathing exercises with Charles at dawn. I started slowly back down the drive, passed a building with decks around it on the left. I took the road to the foundation of Charles and Ava's old house. There was a smaller house a little past where theirs had been, and the incredible view across the valley.

Finally, I approached the seminary building. It seemed completely deserted. I walked up to the front door, which was looking quite weathered. There was a decal in the window to the left that said, "I got my piece at the Powder Horn Gun Shop." The door was locked. There was a large, dark snake coiled in the sun between the front door and the porch. It didn't move at all and I was concerned it might be dead, but it looked beautiful and fat, like it had maybe just had lunch. I stepped respectfully around the snake, walked up the two shaky porch steps and opened the sliding glass door to the kitchen.

The house was abandoned and in disrepair, as if nothing had been done to it for 25 years. It looked smaller than I'd remembered it. The appliances and furniture were gone. As I walked down the hall toward the back bedrooms, memories flooded through my mind: There was the community bathroom and the bathtub where Jeff gave himself an enema with people wandering in and out. And, oh to be in our twenties!, the couples' room where I had 17 orgasms while fasting on avocados. Across the hall was the front bedroom where we did clearing sessions. In the small living room off the kitchen, visions of the sofa, Sandra complaining how she'd lost her beauty, Trudi and I doing clearing exercises, the door where Ken got enlightened after promising to throw himself in the snow if he didn't... There's where the old stove was, which we'd stuffed with enough potatoes and zucchini to feed an army, and the kitchen sink which offered only drops of water. I remembered

Ava, looking radiantly beautiful, talking about vitamins.

In a state of wonder, I climbed the narrow stairway to the main room and was amazed to see the same bright blue carpet that was put in shortly after I arrived in '69. I looked through the windows out over the valley and at the cubby holes where we stored our sleeping bags, clothes and bottles of vitamins and alfalfa tablets. On the two center posts, which hold up the ridge beam, were the thumb tack holes where we used to post our no-no lists, confessing our misbehaviors of the weekends, and the place where David used to sit munching vitamins for what seemed like hours after the rest of us were in our sleeping bags. Near the other post was the spot where Edrid used to run the big copy machine. There were memories of Stu and Martie, Francine and Lila, Susan and Betty, Jim and Suzie, Krishna, Gary, Elyse, Yvonne and Richard, Susan and David, Rich and Jo, Forest, Mark, Bruce, Dennis, William, Sherry, Shelley and the three wonderful Jeffs, Yon and Shirley... I felt grateful for the many friendships that have lasted through the years. I thought of Charles's iridology readings, his teachings, courses on the mind, the body, life and relationships, the clay models, the drills and the tapes...

I remembered the big Intensive the winter of 1970-71, working with Peter Max, how nice he was; Rich, rolling his eyes and going into states I'd never even dreamed of, Jeff saying Rich was the farthest-out man on the planet; contemplating what consciousness is, understanding, the purpose of life, how life is fulfilled and best fulfilled; all we experienced there...our spiritual beginnings...Yogi Bhajan and the different people who came through... yoga on the rug facing the windows, no forcing, no giving up, persistent gentle pressure...we all get there.

I sat on a stool at the end of the room, where Charles used to give his evening talks, where I sat for my student intensive--how natural it felt. I tried to meditate, but there was too much energy in me. I took a last look around and walked down the stairs. I recalled Charles, near the bottom step during my Intensive, asking if I remembered doing this work before. I said, "No." I thought most of that past life stuff was made up. I looked out the front window...visions of the children: Kon, Cheryl (the reincarnated Marilyn Monroe?) and the grovelly little dog, Charlie Brown.

As I made my way out the sliding door and down the porch steps, I noticed that the big snake, still motionless, had an amber-colored rattle at the end of its tail. I felt no fear of this shy desert creature as I stepped to the side of it and started down the drive.

There was the place where Jeff and I parked our green trailer. I was feeling as though I'd entered a time-warp and was revisiting a former lifetime. There was no sound and no life, except for the snake, the cacti and flowers, and me.

I thought I should gather a few rocks, just to remember I hadn't dreamed all this. I found a small white one, surely from the quarry, and a few brown ones that must have been there when we were. I saw the spot beside the road where Jeff and I used to hide our pot before coming back onto the property after weekends. Near the end of the driveway, I spotted a large white rock that sparkled in the sun. I picked it up, but in case it had been someone's special rock, put three other nice ones in its place, along with a banana Power Bar. Feeling a little like a pack rat, I got in the car with my rocks and began the long journey home.

Ninety miles up Hwy. 395, I could still see the criss-cross pattern on the hills above the property; at 150 miles, the mountain range finally disappeared from view.

Consciousness

By Edrid

- Consciousness seems inherently "dual": it is a relationship between what is conscious and what it is conscious of.
- What is conscious can't be conscious of itself because it is unitary (not dividable).
- The unity of conscious experience is based on the fact that what is conscious is unitary.
- Since what is conscious cannot be conscious of itself, it is "empty" of self experience.
- What is called "consciousness of self" is actually consciousness of the mind or feelings (or whatever).
- When one has eliminated all viewing of self and all false identity, it is as if there is no self, and consciousness is non-dual.

T'ai Chi

©1986,1988,1992 Daniel Quincy, Master Instructor

Begin in a moment of stillness. Standing.

Relax.

Submit yourself totally to what is.

Come into open relationship with all, within and without.

Feel your mass in intimate relationship to the great mass under your feet. Then allow the intrinsic impulse of your in-breath to begin to move you in the world.

Relax.

Let your self move from and through your body center.

Let all your movements be motivated by your breath.

Feel and pay attention to your presence in its entirety.

Relax into the integrity of your whole.

Notice your relationship to all about you, and do so with feeling and awareness.

Relax.

Adjust yourself to minimize all effort.

Release your self to be.

Allow yourself to join with whatever is.

Your intention will naturally come from your Heart.

Merely direct your attention to whatever you intend.

Your breath will occur, and will move you.

Thus, exert yourself only in alignment.

Rest calm in your movement.

This is supreme undifferentiated action.

This is the essence of T'ai Chi.

The Path of Tibetan Buddhism

Excerpt from the Life Story of the Lotus-born Guru, published by the Nyingma Meditation Center (with minor edits by Edrid)

The esoteric or inner story begins with the assertion of initial and original perfection but

stresses the path of the Bodhisattva as the necessary relationship to other beings.

Planting the seeds of relative understanding by intellectual means is followed by the maturation of those seeds in experiences gained on the path.

Having gained this foundation, the various parts of the mind are brought under control and the bones of existential awareness are uncovered.

After attaining this understanding, the problems of expressing it for the sake of karmically less-mature beings is solved by translating the inexpressible and essentially indivisible truth into language.

Hence, the twenty-five forms of the master are manifest through different meditation practices, each form used to rebalance a particular disharmony.

After the final stage of integration, the seeds of every eventuality are planted and the means of reaching any faculty of mind are immediately and spontaneously achieved.

Mount Baldy Intensive Aftermath

With Bill Savoie's permission, I am sharing three email letters he sent me after the Mount Baldy Intensive. Some readers will see the familiar loss of the Intensive "high" that often occurs. Something important remains, however. Do you see it?

Bill: K_ and I talked until 2 am and then he got up at 5 am and I got up at 6 am. It was easy to run on little sleep. V_ and I are getting together tomorrow night. She is having difficulty—she feels the Enlightenment Intensive slipping away and wonders if anything will be left. I told her that she needs to be able to let her relationships change—to be more in truth. Treat people better, otherwise we would be getting something for nothing.

Coming down from an Intensive is still a big issue. How would one do it in Wisconsin all by oneself? I find it difficult, even with as many Intensives as I've been to and with both your help and Virginia's help. The difference between sharing and not sharing after an Intensive seems to be that

Words of Wisdom

Always remember you are unique.
Just like everyone else.

if I communicate, I have a road map of what happened as I slowly change back to the old way with its old habits. I think three years ago I was more blame-oriented and I tended to find fault with the Intensive process. Now I take more responsibility and I see my "ordinary" life as less than real and honest. In any case, at an Intensive we have good listeners who we greatly respect, and afterwards we have something else again.

I love new ideas and new fresh expressions of life. I found my chess is now better. I easily beat everybody in the Huntsville Club Spring Chess Tournament, some 16 people who have all beaten me in the past. I have told them my secret—go to an Intensive—but they all think the emotional price is too high! It is their loss. Today I got up at 5 am. I have much more energy, so it is like living twice as much during each day. Now I have enough to do both my job at Lockheed and to advance on my own agenda. The three days spent will be repaid many times.

More later... Bill

Bill: I am very much noticing that I pop in and out of a simulation of Bill. At the Intensive I was open and available. Now I see myself sometimes slipping into a simulation of life, or maybe it is a global interpretation of life. What ever it is, it is very strange. What seems to be happening is that I slip into being "normal" until I see how limited and brain-numbing that is. If I go for truth, my energy goes way up—until I find some blocker, and then I find my self going into a simulation and things go quietly numb again.

It's hard to keep that Enlightenment experience going, that feeling that the world is fresh and alive. I have missed my plan of meditating each morning. I had planned to list the 200 people I interact with in my life, and contemplate my relationship with each one for several minutes...

Slipping into coping mechanisms of deep cover. I am in first place in the city chess championship. I smile to myself and then I wake up and see my loss. Life in a simulation vs real life.

Yesterday (Thursday) I bought \$185 worth of new chess books and the night before I went out with an old chess friend to our weekly Mexican meal and chess. These are nice experiences, but they lack that cosmic scope that I got in the dyad. Each dyad was like a crucible of change and experience.

Really, it wasn't the change that was so transforming—it was the real fact of people listening. Life unfolding in front of us. High quality contact with great subject flexibility. Raw Power. Gosh I love that stuff.

What I find hard to do is to keep open by myself, without that "other" holding on to me. At an Intensive we had help, now we don't...

I am coming to the conclusion that many of my habits will have to change. First, tonight, I want to switch my clock radio to only beep. No radio to start my simulation. Second, I want to "contemplate" (without using "mental" thinking) down a list of people (contemplate the spiritual essence of...). This is to connect me to spiritual love, just like at an Intensive. Third, I want to write down a major goal and a smaller goal and plan out my day. I don't know how this will work yet, but I will do what it takes to wake me up and direct my life. I don't want to lose that life-contact I got at the Intensive.

The fact is we are surrounded by love, so why do we not see it?

Love Bill

Bill: I have been slipping down from the Intensive.

Friday night at the chess club I lost a close game with the friend of mine who loves Rush Lumbar, so rather than a clear first place I shared first place with him. I was happy that it didn't bother me, except I was concerned I wasn't as open as I was a week earlier. I could see 4 to 6 moves ahead rather than the 6 to 10 moves like the week after the Intensive. I don't know who started it but soon we were talking about Clinton and Dole. We were both good-natured about it, but I kind of rubbed it in that Clinton was ahead in the polls. It was an easy win, but it lowered the quality of the contact. It drove me into indirect knowledge and looking for the advantage, rather than having an inclusive experience.

So I left the chess club, as they closed the doors about 11:20 PM, and I got to bed 30 minutes later. The next day, I slipped into sloth and procrastination—all day. I slept in to 10 AM, then watched TV till 11 PM. Nothing. Sunday I went to church, got a late start, and spent 5 hours with my Unitarian Friends, even cried as I experienced various parts of the service. We had a coming of age graduation for 9 teenagers. They were crying,

their parents were crying, and half of the audience was crying. I love to cry.

Sunday night I watched more TV, after spending an hour on the phone on Mother's Day to my Mom. OK, the weekend wasn't what I had planned, but I felt good and rested and ready for Monday. Today I got up early, went home for lunch, and mowed my lawn. I am not beating myself up for how things are going. I know that each thing in my life is there to teach me something. I don't want a life that is not real, or to escape the lessons I must learn. I am much more in love with life now, so there are some things which seem to last after the Intensive.

My life is still somewhat a mess, but my core is clean and in love with everyone. I am easily available for others, and the deep anguish I seemed to have 5 years ago has lifted and turned into exploration and discovery.

My water heater has been leaking hot water for the last month. I think the thermostat is stuck on. That makes my electric bill \$90 a month (rather than \$40), and I have moss growing on my porch, and water under the carpet in Apartment #2. So I have many things to accomplish in the next month or two. These problems are not going anywhere. They will be there till I handle them. I am not bothered by the difficulty of my task—just a few lessons that life will teach me. I know my overall direction: make it simple and that will make me free.

I saw V_ yesterday. She is struggling with not having a clear experience of another directly, and she fears that it may take another and another and another Enlightenment Intensive. Boy it sure is fun to suffer like that. Hit me again. The cup of life is sweet from the first sip to the last drop. We just don't want to miss any of it. I do it too. I stretch it out to really make it last. We keep the rejection until we have had enough of it. Life is truly beautiful in all of it's aspects.

Chow baby, Bill

Rama to disciple:

Friend, why do you worry? Surrender all your thoughts to me by my power and all your priorities will determine themselves.

Third Day at Mount Baldy

Tony Levelle

Midway through the third day of the Southern California Annual Intensive, I was in dyad with another. What came up was, 'I need to go to the toilet'. After being excused, I hurried outside. It was a beautiful spring day on Mount Baldy. About halfway down the path to the toilet I looked up. What I saw stopped me in mid-stride. I saw the bright green pine trees waving in the wind. The heavy granite boulders glowing brilliantly in the sun. And the trees, waving in the wind. The realization burned through my mind. "It's all so simple. It's all right here. We're making it so complicated, but it's all right here."

Toilet forgotten, I stood staring at the mountain, the Zen center, the green aliveness of spring. Everything was so obvious. Life, Self, God, Another, Love, Death. Right here, right before me. I felt I could answer any of the dyad questions. Then I walked to the toilet.

The toilets at the Mount Baldy Zen center are outhouses perched on top of large cement septic tanks. The toilet seat is about a foot and a half above an open hole. Four feet below the hole is 500 gallons of sewage. On a hot spring day, the odor fills the outhouse like a heavy fog. The smell was glorious! Perfect! How could it be less?

In the next dyad everything seemed hugely funny, we were all so serious! I kept collapsing in giggles and belly laughs. Each time Edrid and Edda brought me back to the process. I don't have words to explain what happened next. The experience was not mystical in any sense. It was rather the most normal experience I can remember. I experienced Love as a large "field", in which I was present. I felt "at home". Although "I" was there, "Tony" wasn't there. I had no likes or dislikes. No fear, no desire, I was just present. But, it didn't feel like Love "should" feel. No warm bliss, just normality, a feeling of being "home". So I decided to throw away the rule book and simply report the qualities of this place to my partner.

I was alone. That surprised me. The field seemed limitless. Then, I felt myself being "pulled" to a space that I perceived as bright and warm. A mental picture of a white mansion surrounded by white columns came to mind. And with it, the immediate knowledge that the mansion was a mental construct, a tool to help me stay "there". I felt a presence. Light. Compassion. Love.

Dimly, I thought "I should do the process." I started to visualize an object representing love. I heard the firm message, "You don't have to do that now." I felt as if I was being "recharged" with something vital.

The bell rang, and we changed over. My partner was working on Love as well, and midway through his turn I felt a sudden "contact" with him. A warm tingling on my body. I usually feel this 'contact' during dyads. Strangely I hadn't felt it in the prior two days of the Intensive. I realized that right here, right now was the only place we could make contact with each other. Right here, right now. Love allowed us contact with God or the Divine. But Love only allows us to contact each other in the now. Wherever we are, whoever we are with, that's it. That's all there is.

During the break that followed, I went up to take a shower. As I was showering, the head monk walked in. He started showering in the next stall. I finished first. I was about to dress when he came out to towel off. We ignored each other. I reached for my pants. Suddenly, and with complete certainty I experienced Love as an ever present potential. Available to express as we choose. Joyfully or harmfully. I knew with absolute certainty that every possible human act is one of Love. The words "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do," came to mind. Christ, in excruciating pain, saw that by torturing and murdering three others, these people were doing something horrible to themselves. Something so terrible, that nothing they could do to the physical body of another could compare with the damage they were doing to themselves.

I finished dressing, walked to the meditation hall and told Edrid my experience. He smiled blissfully. I sat down and waited for the next dyad.

Ain't it the Truth

Bill Savoie

*I am being swept into logical interpersonal contracts
Driven by systems of relative meaning
Within a growing web of responsibility,
And now God is starting to hide.*

Here is a lovely Rumi verse for you

Submitted by Tapas

A certain person came to the Friend's door and knocked.

"Who's there?"

"It's me."

The Friend answered, "Go away. There's no place for raw meat at this table."

The individual went wandering for a year. Nothing but the fire of separation can change hypocrisy and ego. The person returned completely cooked, walked up and down in front of the Friend's house, gently knocked.

"Who is it?"

"You."

"Please come in, my Self. There's no place in this house for two."

And Another by Rumi

For years I pulled my own existence out of emptiness.

Then one swoop, one swing of the arm, that work is over.

Free of who I was, free of presence, free of dangerous fear, hope,

Free of mountainous wanting.

The here-and-now mountain is a tiny piece of a piece of straw

Blown off into emptiness.

Cold Mountain Poem 68

By T'ang poet Han-shan (circa 900AD)

Would you know a simile for life and death?

Compare them then to water and ice.

Water binds together to become ice;

Ice melts and turns back into water.

What has died must live again,

What has been born shall return to death.

Water and ice do no harm to each other;

Life and death are both of them good.

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Email: sao@sandoth.com; Web: <http://www.sandoth.com>; FAX: 415 324-9151

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Published quarterly (Ha!). Subscription: USA \$5.00 for 4 issues. International: \$10.00. Send subscription requests to:
Subscription Desk, Self & Other, 508 Pope Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

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