

TRAINING THE DOG QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Alan Zundel at the HeartAwake Center, April 28th 2007
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Q: Would you repeat the first part, when you were describing the three levels, when you seek the third level?

A: You can really think of the spiritual life and cut it up into all kind of stages, but three stages is pretty traditional. The first stage is simply when your mind just runs off after all kind of things, then the meditation practice is to bring it back to a focus, bring it back, bring it back. The second stage is mindfulness, where you can see your mind going off in these things without getting lost in it, or you're practicing doing that. You become aware that, 'oh, I've lost myself in that, now I'm going to hold back from fully losing myself.' And the final stage is awakening, where you realize that all that mind stuff together was a place that you felt you were yourself—where your identity lied. Letting go of that leash is letting go of connection to that self, saying, 'I am not that; I am not the combination of my thoughts, memories, of who I am and where I've been and where I'm going—I'm not that, I'm something deeper. That's simply my mind, that's my memories, my emotions.' So it's becoming aware of who you really are.

Q: When you let go of that, what comes? You're not the self that you were, but your deeper self—so it's a different sense of being?

A: Yes, you could put it that way. Another way to put it is you're going through this process, and usually you feel yourself very much to be your mind. 'I am what I'm thinking, what I'm feeling,' et cetera, but gradually you become aware that you have this quiet space inside yourself. This is what you're trying to get back in touch with when you meditate. And you also feel it at times in your day to day life, 'hey, this is part of me; I'm often distracted from it but it's part of me.' And the sense is, 'I am this mind who is trying to get in touch with this deeper self.' The awakening is the flip, where you go from 'I am this mind trying to get in touch with this deeper self' to 'oh! I am this deeper self that has this mind.' And the presence is there pretty much continually, that quiet space, and the mind can operate within that quiet space and you don't get lost in [the mind], you don't get pulled away in it. As I said, [the deeper self] has it's own agenda. You can think of this in the sense of intuitions that you sometimes get, or these deeper inclinations, that 'oh, my life is supposed to go this way or that way.' Usually we're so much in our head that we plan out and plot out our life and it doesn't usually end up anything like that [plan]. But those moments in your life when you have that feeling that maybe God is guiding you or something deeper is saying, 'no don't do this, go this way,' that becomes there as just a day to day guiding principle. When you feel that movement from within rather than needing to rely on your ideas about where you're supposed to be going, you just live out of that space.

Q: Well, that's still, to me, a mystery.

A: It's a mystery for all of us. [*laughs*]

Q: That part about getting closer, to be beyond our conscious self, to our internal self.

A: The aim, really, is to skate on the edge between the two of them. Because a lot of times people have a sudden experience of, 'oh, I'm not this self' and it'll feel very, very different. But you can't live in that space all the time. The space you can live in is right on the edge between these two selves, where they come together. The ordinary day to day self of thoughts and feelings, and this other self with this quiet—just space. You live on the edge of that without having to fall one way or the other. A lot of times people have the assumption that the idea is to get so far away from your ordinary self that you're just in this state of bliss and there's no relationship with ordinary human life. To me, it's not that at all. It's coming in touch with that, but yet maintaining contact with ordinary life. I mean, living a human life and not a life of walking on air—or water, maybe that's a better picture, walking on water. [*laughs*]

Q: Like that 'Moonbeam' thing with Jerry Brown.

A: Yeah, the accusation that you're just spacy all the time.

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