

## Rest in the Stillness

### Question & Answer Session

Alan Zundel at the HeartAwake Center, August 8th 2007

*www.heartawake.org*

**AZ:** Okay. So once again I invite you to speak, or ask questions—or raise objections. *[laughs]*

**Q1:** I don't know, it seems that I'm resisting the judgment on doing anything but dropping an anchor.

**AZ:** Judgment?

**Q1:** Well, the image of, the only function of the self is to keep me from my Maker or an experience of the depth of life. I have to negate my self—the image of the seaweed, you know, as far as then finding that that's when I have an image of my self keeping me from the image of God or whatever—the depths, the silent place. It doesn't paint a very good picture of my self.

**AZ:** This seems to come up for you a lot.

**Q1:** Well, I mean, I'm trying to be at ease with my self. I don't like fighting my self.

**AZ:** Fighting your self? How would you fight—?

**Q1:** Defeating it. Saying I've got to escape the entwines of the—I keep coming back to a colleague of mine who always said, 'You are your neuroses—love 'em.'

**AZ:** Is that who you feel you are?

**Q1:** Yeah. I mean, it depend on what you call neuroses, but I'm the unique person I am that isn't someone else, and that grew up the way I did and had the experiences I had, which has bent me to like some things and not like other things—

**AZ:** Is that *all* you are?

**Q1:** No, I think you're right there—it's not all I am. I think on the other side I'm connected to all of life, but—I guess it's the negative part of it I object to.

**AZ:** Yeah, I'm not sure why you're perceiving this as negative—that there's a negation, that there's a denial, that there's an escaping.

**Q1:** Well, just the idea that the seaweed that is keeping me from being one with life is my self-image, sort of says that I've got to get rid of my self-image.

**AZ:** Well no, not get rid of—untangle it. Take a look at it, examine it, see where it's coming from. Ask the question, 'Who am I really? Is this all I am? Is there more to it?'

**Q1:** I guess that's—that there's something down there that's really *me*—

**AZ:** Well, that's not to say that the you that you usually sense yourself to be is not you, too.

**Q1:** So maybe 'really' is the problem word.

**AZ:** I wouldn't use 'really,' I would use 'only.' Is this *only* who I am? Am I *only* my neuroses? Or am I more than my neuroses?

**Q1:** Okay. I can see that.

**AZ:** And when you find that your neuroses may have taken over your life, or may be defining your life in ways that you are uncomfortable with, then take a look at them and ask, 'Where do they come from? What are they composed of? Can I see through this and drop that anchor a little deeper?' Now, the picture of the seaweed may be that the seaweed is gone and you've escaped from it, but metaphors have their limits.

**Q1:** Right.

**AZ:** That seaweed's going to be there—

**Q1:** There's going to be part of my neuroses that aren't very helpful, that's for sure, and that I might strive to change. I can see that too.

**AZ:** Maybe we could say that the chain and the anchor are going to keep some strands of seaweed there even though you've untangled it. In other words, you know, you've kind of pulled it loose but some rips off and stays with it. That part of your self is always going to be there in some form, but it doesn't have to define you. You don't have to put your anchor *in* the seaweed, you want to put your anchor deeper.

**Q1:** I guess I'm at the point of the word which for me says that 'All life is good; I'm accepted as I am, I don't need to be anything else and I can live my life as it is.' Now, that's only part of the word, but it's a very hard one to accept sometimes.

**AZ:** Um hmm. Well, that would be a different way of phrasing what I think I'm saying. It's not to say, 'I don't want to be who am.' It's to say, 'Look at who you think you are or who you feel yourself to be, and ask if that's all that's there.' If you want to put it, 'I'm accepted,' well, I think what happens when you're stuck in that seaweed is that you're not really accepting the totality of yourself. You want to cling to one part of yourself because maybe you fear another part of yourself, or you don't want to feel what it is to go deeper. Not you personally, but in general, people want to feel—what? They feel secure when they're, when they've—those neuroses that define them are familiar and they know who they are. They feel secure in that. Yet there's this dissatisfaction because it's not *all* of who they are, and they always feel they're missing something.

Now, neuroses are sometimes resolved. I mean, if you want to talk strictly about neuroses, not simply about character, personality traits—complexes, you know: your father was abusive and now your self-image is a person who's not worthy. Well, that can disappear. Some neuroses do disappear, once you examine or work through them—so you can let go of that seaweed entirely. Other parts of your self are just—maybe you just want to drop down deeper, maybe you don't have to untangle it, maybe it's going to go through that seaweed and be part of a bed of seaweed but keep going through it until it finds the floor. Then the floor for you will be in that particular bed of seaweed that defines this self that you usually present to the world. But I wouldn't want to negate who you are, or have you escape from that—I like you! [*laughs*]

**Q1:** That's good.

**Q2:** I guess I wonder *how*. It seems as though this particular story in contrast to some of the others—I'm not much of a visualizer ordinarily—can be very, very visual, in that the anchor, which is heavy, getting tangled up in the seaweed—that must be quite a quite a strong ball of seaweed to keep the anchor from going lower or from dragging the seaweed down. So how do you drop the anchor inside the seaweed and hopefully disentangle it? You visualize it, and therefore that's your concept and that's the way it is? Or is there something else?

**AZ:** You mean, visualize it as seaweed, or—?

**Q1:** No, visualize the anchor going down, deeper and deeper and deeper, not restricted by the seaweed.

**AZ:** Well, part of it is relaxation. If this dropping of the anchor represents relaxing into your full beingness, part of it is recognizing that your anchor has not dropped as deep as it can, relaxing so that it can. You can think of when you're tense, that seaweed is tight; when you start to relax, it starts to loosen up. The seaweed is actually your mind, your small mind, the way I've been phrasing it in the past. Large mind is the ocean floor; small mind is the things in the sea that are waving around here. When you get tense, when you get caught up on something, it's balled up tightly. When you relax more, when you look at it, when you examine it, it starts to loosen. It becomes more transparent to you. All I'm referring to is answers to the question 'Who am I?' that come up as they come up. When you *feel* it, not just—sometimes it's a thought process but sometimes it's a feeling.

Like for me, recently, something that came up was this recognition that a very central part of my sense of my self has been since I was a child identifying with the figure of Jesus. Because I was raised a Christian and I heard the stories about Jesus when I was going to church with my family. But why this became particularly important for me, as it came up recently and I began to just relax with this and look into it and allow myself ask, 'What is this really about?' and not just think, 'Well, I have to be like Jesus if I'm to be a Christian,' but 'Why is this important in the way it's been important to me in particular?' What I came up with—just resting in that sense of that, realizing that it was about this sense of Jesus going back a long time, kind of playing with it in my mind over the course of several days, maybe meditating on it or maybe letting my mind turn it over during free moments of

the day—what gradually came out of it was that growing up I didn't have any figure of an adult male role model who was happy with their job. I grew up in a working class neighborhood, I didn't know any professionals—people that you would think maybe they entered a career because they wanted to do this, and now they feel good about what they're doing, serving the world or something. This was a neighborhood where the men were all—they took jobs because they had to support their family and the job wasn't always a job that they enjoyed, and they felt stuck and unhappy. And this was the picture they were giving me, to become an adult male meant, 'You gotta buckle down and do something you may hate to do.' And so in rejecting that, I had the—one of the alternatives I had was this story of Jesus, which was a socially approved story, and what did Jesus do? He seemed pretty free from that sense of 'I have to do this though I hate it;' he seemed like he was doing what he felt was right, what he felt was important. And so it became clear to me that for *me*, part of the identification of myself as someone who was trying to be like Jesus had to do with picking up a male role model to replace role models that were offered me that I was rejecting.

So it's this process of seeing something come up and seeing that it was hanging me up in some way, that in trying so much to be like Jesus sometimes I was not allowing myself to be who God created me to be, which is really what 'being like Jesus' should mean, is being fully who God created you to be and fulfilling your part in God's plan, your life's path. If you get too stuck on trying to follow a particular path and your life is not cooperating with that, there's this suffering that's involved and you start asking, 'What is this about? What is this about? What is the image of myself that's leading me to be in conflict with the way my life seems to want to take me?' Am I answering your question?

**Q2:** It doesn't need to be answered.

**AZ:** Okay. [*laughs*] Just wanted to give me an opportunity to talk some more, huh?

**Q2:** Well, I like hearing your personal examples. Another part of what you're talking about seems to be that there's a part of us that compares ourselves to others in the world, and that's kind of the aging, forgetting, slowing down, et cetera. And I think also what you're tapping into is the idea of the ageless, timeless part of ourself, perhaps that has always been and always will be, and it's not restricted by our conceptual thinking.

**AZ:** It probably comes up because for Marianne and I the sense of aging is becoming more present to us. You know, we haven't quite accepted it yet. [*laughs*]

**Q3:** You're not quite there, that's why.

**AZ:** Not *quite* there but, you know, starting to feel it coming on pretty inevitably. So it's in the forefront of our minds and it's an example I thought you all could appreciate.

**Q3:** I was in a group where we worked on higher self and always thinking in a higher way, and sometimes we couldn't stay on the higher way because of some trait within ourselves—getting envious, or getting angry about something, or some part of us would kind of take us off the path. That seems a little like that.

**AZ:** Did that work for you?

**Q3:** Uh huh. I think I still do that. I feel like sometimes something in my self, in my lower self, pulls me back, holds me up.

**AZ:** Yeah. There's two ways that this could be understood, and it's really hard to distinguish them when you're in the middle of it, but there's a difference between having an idea of who you'd like to be and trying to live up to it and finding obstacles arise, and having an inner sense of who you're meant to be and finding obstacles arising to that. Because somebody could adopt an image of what a saintly person is supposed to be like, and so this image has these traits of maybe never getting angry, never getting envious, always being happy and patient with people, or whatever the particular image is. And then you find yourself not behaving in ways that seem to correspond with that image, with that model that you set for yourself. Now, if that's a picture in your mind rather than something that's coming from within that's an expression of your deeper self, you're going to be adopting a different sense of self that's in your imagination that you can never fully be. Do you understand what I'm saying?

If a person adopts an unrealistic idea about what it means to be holy, or in union with God or enlightened or something like this—if a person adopts a picture and tries to imitate that, or tries to remove from themselves anything that seems to be not part of that picture, it will—it won't work, in my experience. It doesn't work that way. It comes more from allowing yourself to really tap into who you really are and who you're really becoming, and asking where the tension is that seems to keep you from being able to express that more freely. So it's not obstacles to fulfilling this particular picture of who you're supposed to be, it's an obstacle to actually living out what seems to be wanting to be lived out from within you. Those things are closely related because usually there's a back-and-forth where people feel that 'Within myself I have this sense of stillness, and if this was fully expressed I would be maybe more peaceful and less prone to anger or envy or something like this,' and you get a sense of that and you incorporate that in your picture of what you're trying to become. But if that picture becomes too all-important, you're going to find yourself denying the reality of who you are in order to pretend to be something. Am I making any sense?

**Q2:** And you're not genuine.

**AZ:** Yeah, there's a genuineness and authenticity that you want to work toward, not simply living up to an image, whatever it happens to be.

**Q4:** It sounds like, what you were just talking about sounds like, do we—accepting more—like I have this image of being holy and I beat myself up all the time throughout the years, 'Oh, I should be praying more.' You know, whatever it is, Bible verses or whatever. Instead of, 'Oh, that's all good—and how you encountered God today was accepting something about your self or something about—?' And really sensing compassion and dwelling with it, that's God.

**AZ:** Let me put it this way. If I was to say to you that to come into a more awake state means

you're less prone to anger, and you were to take that and say, 'Okay, I want to be more awake so I'm not going to get angry.' Then inevitably—*inevitably*—there's going to come a time when you get angry. And your reaction will be, 'I'm not living up to this, I have to get rid of this anger; I have to somehow deny it, repress it, disown it.' The potential for being angry is always going to be a part of who you are, and there will be situations, in my opinion, where anger is appropriate. So if you try to deny this, repress it, remove it, what you're doing is clinging to a clump of seaweed that says 'not-angry person,' and not allowing yourself to descend to this stillness where if anger comes up it doesn't sweep you away. Are you following me?

So it's a difference between anchored in the stillness and pretending to be somebody who resembles what you expect it to look like. It doesn't work to try to not be what you are. When you're angry, the first thing you have to admit to yourself is you're angry. When you're worried, the first thing you have to admit is you're worried. You can't approach it by saying, 'I'm not supposed to be this way.' The reality is what you're after: 'What is real here? Who am I really? I'm a person who's capable of anger, like every other human being, and right now I'm in the midst of anger'—well, let's look at that. What is this based on? Where is this coming from? If it seems like it's not working in my life, if this anger has become a problem for some reason—rather than helping motivate me to do something or resolving situations, if this anger is something that blocks creative energies and destroys relationships—where is it coming from?

Sometimes it can even be the frustration of trying to be something that you're not—trying to be a not-angry person when you're in situations that call forth anger, and that *should* call forth anger. So you have to be honest with yourself above all; going back, yes, to authenticity. Say: 'What more is there? There's anger here, yes, but there's something more—what more is there? Let's find that stillness.' That stillness can be present along with anger; that stillness can be present along with just about anything. There's some things that, when the stillness—when it arises in the stillness it will dissipate much more easily. But to come to a point where things never arise? Maybe somebody's experienced that, I don't know—I haven't. [*laughs*] And I haven't heard credible cases of people who have. So perhaps, but my experience is it's all there—it's all there, all the range of human feelings, emotions, even those various senses of self are there, but what you want to do is find that something more, that stillness that's metaphorically at the bottom of it all. Am I addressing your point?

[*long pause*]

**Q4:** [*whispers:*] We've reached the stillness.

**AZ:** We are resting in the stillness. Thank you. Thank you.

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