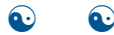


Chapter Thirty-three

RELIGION III

*Resistance creates Hell in your mind. Acceptance, receptivity
and total affirmation create
new awareness, new insight, and Heavenly bliss
the likes of which you have never known before.*

LU



SL At the Center of Timeless Eternity

Hi, S,

I received a letter from a friend named T this morning that touched on some of the things you and I have been talking about along the way. Thought you might find value in the exchange. A month or so ago, he was diagnosed as having a brain tumor. They operated on him and the operation went well, although the lab results were “not so good.” They could extend his life somewhat, but not save him. T immediately went on to say that he is “a firm believer in Jesus Christ and his miracles,” and then followed that with, “if you know of any alternative West Coast treatments for this situation, I am listening.”

During the remainder of the letter he spoke of his love for music in general and Tim and Jeff Buckley in particular. He was touched by my book, *Blue Melody*, and felt

himself drawing closer to Tim and Tim's music, saying, "I find Tim's music so relaxing. At least he did not have to suffer in this way."

I wrote the following letter to him, in part —

. . . . It is good you are following the doctors' procedures and directives. No need to feel guilty about that. Once upon a time, long ago, a shaman would have made a poultice of mud and leaves and placed it on your forehead. He would have smudged you with sage smoke and chanted some tribal power-words over your supine body, and told you to go home and pray to the gods. You would have died within a week.

With the passing of centuries, that same shaman still desires to salve your pain and heal your illness. Today, however, he has centuries of exploration, study, experimentation, and technical expertise at his fingertips. The knowledge and skills of hundreds of his forebears are with him, developed and advanced over centuries. He heals today with the same love and hope and dedication that his primitive brothers and sisters brought to the task, but he now has with him medicines and technologies and skills undreamt of by his ancient peers. Were his forebears alive today, they would not reject today's medicines and procedures. They would not urge him to turn his back on new knowledge and return to the well-meaning but comparatively ignorant technologies of the past. No, they would stand up and applaud the doctors and exclaim, "Magnificent! Tell us everything you did and how you did it!"

Music in all of its forms can be a profound comfort. Listen to whatever moves you, my friend. Listen to whatever touches your heart and sings your own song. Open your heart to every musician who speaks your tongue and gives you love, heart, courage, sympathy, and appreciation. In music, there is ultimate understanding of your dreams and sorrows, joys and heartaches, your fears and hopes. You have a

friend in music that is loyal to you every day in every way, from now to the end of time.

I know you love Tim. Jeff did wondrous things too. There is another kind of music as well. You may already be aware of David Parsons. He has recorded some of the most beautiful and intensely inner instrumental music I know of on *Dorje Ling*. I urge you to get it and spend time with it, perhaps lighting a few candles, sitting on the couch or lying in your bed, listening undisturbed with eyes closed, letting the music wing you out of the personal domain, up and into transpersonal realms where universal beauty awakens in your own heart. Henry Wolff is another great musician, one of the most extraordinary Tibetan bell players I have ever heard, perhaps particularly on his CD, *The Bells of Sh'ang Sh'ung*.

In this time of special intensity, T, you might be particularly receptive to the powerful, yet serene, energies of the musics Parsons and Wolf and some others I can tell you about if you wish. There is depth and substance in these musics, intense, spiritually-charged energies that can give you great strength and a profound sense of love and reverence for existence, of which you are an integral part.

These musicians understand that you are not alone, separate, isolated. You are at-one-with existence. When you realize that directly, not through faith or belief, but as direct experience, you realize the bedrock reality upon which Jesus, Buddha, Lao Tzu and others based their teachings. You suddenly *know* what they were talking about and attempting to communicate to their disciples — and to us.

Go for it, T. This is a new period in your life. It can be absolutely the best and fullest and richest and most incandescent time you have ever known. Embrace it, cherish it, experience it to the depths and heights.

I wish you well,
All the very best, my friend,
L

TA **The Sacred Joy of This Moment's Shining Reality**

Hi, T, good to hear from you again.

My heart goes out to you about your brain tumor and the recent operation you had on it. I hope and trust you will be able to live longer than the doctors indicate. Meanwhile, let me suggest something. You are not inherently locked into any viewpoint. You have *choices* about the ways in which you can see and understand your life and your situation.

Hell and Heaven are not geographical places somewhere in the sky, as your Christian beliefs tell you. They exist here and now, in our own mind. It is not what happens to us that determines the Hell or Heaven in which we find ourselves at any given moment, but the ways in which we interpret, define, and react to what happens. We create our own Heaven. We create our own Hell. We can choose.

Utilizing the tools and technologies of modern medicine is not a “sin,” as you suggest. It is sane, and a good thing. Exploring herbal alternatives and other forms of traditional healing methodologies might prove helpful, *but not at the expense* of today's incredibly advanced medical methods and technologies. Doing whatever you can to diminish physical problems is perfectly in harmony with life, nature, and good sense. Nothing wrong with that. Utilize whatever helps and whatever works — traditional herbs *and* modern pharmaceuticals.

However, my primary focus here is about something else: the way in which you choose to view and interpret the time you have left here and now.

The human ego sees itself as being separate from existence. It will do anything in its power to fight against natural realities. By “raging against the dying of the light,” as Dylan Thomas once put it, the ego creates for itself hellacious anxiety and pain and anguish, all of which are completely unnecessary.

Not only is Dylan Thomas’s raging egoic resistance futile — no matter what we think or feel, we all die — but that kind of futile resistance is delusory and self-immolating. It is placing a personal demand upon the vastness of all-inclusive existence. Like a child throwing a tantrum, it is telling existence to conform to our separate, personal, egoic dictates.

Have you noticed? We do this in a wide variety of ways. We appeal to gods, saviors, miracles and supernatural powers. These appeals are projections of the fears and hopes, terrors and frightened wishes of one’s own mind. If you think about it, you can see how the attempt to force existence to conform to personal preferences in matters of mortality is not only futile; it is presumptuous in the extreme, and sadly self-deluding.

“Raging against the dying of the light” creates the hellish agony and “bloody fists” you write about in your beautiful poem, and only prevents you from attaining the very “freedom” you wish for: freedom from egoic separation, and mergence with Universal Reality. I think you can see how this kind of fear and resistance is at once disrespectful of natural processes, even as it is a form of culturally sanctified masochism.

On the other hand, if one consciously drops one’s dependence upon fear-based belief systems (such as Christianity) and opens oneself to the magnificent sacredness of existence itself, in which all things arise, sing, and pass away; if one takes care of one’s immediate medical needs in a compassionate, rational way, as you apparently are, while opening one’s heart and mind to the universal energies that flow eternally and are available to all, simply by seeing clearly; if one clears

one's eyes of the blinding clouds of fears, beliefs, conditioned theocentric hypotheses, and of the desperate efforts to preserve and extend egoic duration into either some sort of earthly immortality or infinite supernatural post-life duration — then a whole new way of experiencing this time of your life appears like a bedazzling sunrise.

Liberated from fear-based, mytho-magical dogma, you can enter a state of profound relaxation; acceptance of the river's flow; non-resistance; embracing the sacred joy of this moment's shining reality. You will enable yourself to see *and appreciate* the miracle of life and consciousness in all of its splendor, and recognize that you are *not* a separate egoic entity. You are part and parcel of this splendor. You are not alone. You are with all-that-is. This way of experiencing this time of your life is absolutely natural and can awaken the Universal Reality in your own soul: which is, in fact, what you already are: You are the All, and the All is you.

In this clear-sighted liberation you can *allow* yourself to experience what is, in fact, a state of being and a state of mind that is Universal, natural, and sacred in itself. Life's beauty and joy take your breath away. Love for yourself, your lover and family, other people in the world over, all of nature, and the incomprehensible vastness and beauty of existence becomes so strong, so true, so powerful, that you feel overwhelmed with bliss. It comes from *within* you, because it is already in you, awaiting your recognition and your attunement with it.

This is the way to live one's life every day, of course, but we rarely do. However, when directly confronted with your own mortality or the mortality of someone close to you, the door to the psychological and spiritual realities I am pointing to swings wide open. Each moment becomes a moment of choice.

Fear, resistance, various kinds of pre-rational theocentric, mytho-magical dogmas, and dependence upon a host of saviors projected out of our own mind only slam that door shut. But if you breathe deeply, drop illusions, delusions, dependencies, desperate clinging to hopes of infinite egoic duration, and expansively open your

heart and mind wide to this vast life within yourself, then this beauty, this moment, this context, this set of circumstances, this matrix of loved ones and the magnificent universe in which we find ourselves makes itself as clear as pure light. You can live every moment overflowing with joy, peace, happiness, exuberance, gratitude, appreciation, respect, courage, strength, and above all the loving bliss that contains all of the power, dignity and insightful realizations that enlightened masters from time immemorial have known and tried to share with us.

As I said, you have choices. And the choice is up to you. You are already free. You only have to recognize it.

If you let yourself understand what I am talking about, this new phase of your life can be the best and fullest and richest and most incandescent time you have ever known. Resistance creates Hell in your mind. Acceptance, receptivity and total affirmation create new awareness, new insight, and Heavenly bliss the likes of which you have never known before.

All best wishes,
L

TA Religious Translation is not Spiritual Transformation

Hi, T,

. . . . My greatest concern regarding these matters is not religion in general and its trappings, or Christianity in particular. My greatest concern is in finding ways to help people such as yourself experience that at-one-with realization that Jesus knew and talked about: "I and my Father are One."

Believing in supernatural divinities (gods, saviors, angels, etc.), believing in some sort of afterlife that may or may not exist, and importuning a projected God or gods so that one may be “saved” and thereby transported to some sort of imagined Heaven after death, does *not* transform consciousness. It does *not* help you realize that you too are at-one-with God; that you too are at-one-with the whole of existence; that you too are at-one-with eternal creativity. You can fabricate imagined saviors and worship them all you want, but that does not change *you*. It only validates your ego and its needs. It does not awaken Higher Consciousness, exactly the kind and quality of consciousness Jesus evolved into himself and wanted you to attain.

Pre-rational religions gave birth to rationality; rationality gave birth to love; love can eventually give birth to transpersonal, transrational Higher Consciousness. That is what Jesus was talking about. That is what religions locked into traditional dogmas miss. They not only miss it, they murder it. Hence, the crucifixion for Jesus, the poisoning of Socrates, the stoning of Buddha, the poisoning of Osho, etc.

Jesus brought a revolution. First, he acknowledged the laws of Moses, embraced Judaic traditions, and embodied many of the prophecies in order to prove he was the Master for whom his people had been waiting (“Rabbi” means “Master”).

He then took the next step up the hierarchy of consciousness, a step higher than law. He brought love. He brought freedom. He brought choice. He brought an entirely new way of perceiving ourselves and others. In dozens of different ways, an eye for an eye became turn the other cheek; tribal revenge became love thy neighbor, etc., etc., etc. He did not want us to remain slaves of the past, of history, of tradition. He embraced and fulfilled tradition, *then overthrew it*, leading the way up to the next higher level of consciousness. He wanted us to experience for ourselves what he had experienced and what he knew: We and existence are one: all of existence is holy; life is holy; revere yourself, revere life: obey the law, yes, *and* ascend to universal love.

Unfortunately after Jesus' demise, Paul and the rest of the priests and mediators quickly stepped in, organized Jesus' revolutionary and evolutionary overthrow of conventional worship-based orthodoxy, and created a new orthodoxy known as "Christianity," thereby eliminating even the hope of direct realization. Contrary to John's writings about "believe and you will be saved," belief and worship do not constitute Self-realization. Beliefs in miracles, God, Jesus as a one-and-only divine avatar, and a projected eternal Heaven or Hell in an imagined afterlife does not inwardly change *you*. You worship, yes, and you translate life through Paul and John's Christian lenses, but *you* remain the same. Paul and John and the rest of them knocked direct experience right out of Jesus' teachings. In effect, they killed Jesus by killing his message. They and their followers, including you, continue killing him every day by mistranslating his message into dogmatic Christian orthodoxy.

Somebody once said, "What is the greatest obstacle between Jesus and the people?"
Answer: "Christianity."

If you can realize God or universal existence within yourself, and do it directly, what do you need the church and its priests for? Paul and subsequent variations of the church substituted rules, laws, and ritualistic procedures for freedom. Like John of the gospels, they gave us in exchange for belief the promise of eternal life and eternal reward (or eternal punishment for failing to comply to the beliefs and procedures). They gave us comfort and self-deceiving consolations: If I believe, I am saved. If I worship and talk to the sky, I will live forever. Paul and his successors gave us promises and dreams and self-delusions to mollify us and keep us enslaved through guilt, fear, and hope.

I have no problem with Jesus. I think he was magnificent. However, I have little to say about Christianity either in its historically barbaric forms or in its hysterical mainstream and right-wing contemporary manifestations. I have looked deeply and intensely into numerous religions, including Bible-based belief systems, Christian and Islamic dogma, and the power of that dogma, which most definitely does *not*

serve as an open gateway into Self-realization and the direct experience of awakening that Jesus and other Masters throughout history have tried to share with us. In fact, belief systems in general, including yours in particular, serve only as barriers to Self-actualization.

Between you and Self-recognition stands the wall of your conditioned mind. Between you and the clear-light realization of the integral nature of existence itself, call it God, Tao, Brahma or what you will, stands the perhaps insurmountable wall of religious beliefs with all of its primitive mythological imagery, idols, rituals and desperate hopes and fears. Your own mind with its conditioned perceptions stands between you and everything Jesus was talking about. Religious translation is not spiritual transformation. Wipe your mind clean, Jesus said. Become innocent and clear like a child, and awaken to the Kingdom of God within.

Not “out there,” but *within*.

Good luck, T,
Hope you heal quickly and get well soon,
With Highest Regards,
All the very best,
Lee

MJ Transsexuality and Socio-Religious Conditioning

Hello, M,

Thank you so much for sharing with me your complex story about the internal and external struggles you have endured over the question of your male-to-female transsexuality. By all means relax. I feel honored that you would trust me and

honestly express your situation, risking the pain of rejection, a pain that has scarred you deeply over the course of the past 18 years or so. My heart goes out to you. I am on your side.

Although I hardly know you, I felt happy for you when I read your words, "I don't even hate myself anymore, and I actually think it's alright to be me." Through all of the darkness, pain, misery, self-doubt, self-contempt, and relentless guilt, you have managed to 1) understand your sexuality, and 2) reach that point of self-acceptance, which opens all kinds of positive doors for you. Understanding and self-acceptance are key points. With those two things alone, you embark upon the path of liberation. Sometimes, freedom is such an uphill struggle, isn't it?

I suspect you know only too well that the society at large is ruthlessly condemnatory of anything and everything that fails to conform to its values and ways of life. Religions, politicians and educational institutions rigorously promulgate society's established values and demand absolute conformity. Those who do not fit into their notions of morality or sexuality or behavioral niches are ruthlessly condemned. And those who willfully rebel against such notions, whether they be gay rebels, transsexual rebels, or politically, ideologically, or religiously rebellious individualists suffer immense persecution. The wounds go deep.

From childhood on, every one of us is conditioned by these people; we absorb their retrogressive thinking, their outmoded scriptural values, their notions of "good" and "bad" and "right" and "wrong." We live and breathe the things they instill in us. And if we don't fit — if our mental, spiritual, sexual and/or creative energies declare their independence — we inevitably pass through horrors of guilt within ourselves. The guilt feels as if it comes from within (and in a sense it does, because we have absorbed and integrated their teachings, and *believe* what we have been taught, hence the guilt). That guilt is the direct result of the conditioning we have received at the hands of parents, teachers, political figures, priests, and other representatives of the social order.

I understand. I sense that your near-suicidal sufferings are the direct result of your finding yourself to be virtually alone, and afflicted with the notion that you were "sick" or "bad" or "perverted." Indeed, you knew yourself to be profoundly isolated, socially condemned, guilt-ridden, and wracked with pain. I can't blame you, which is why, once again, my heart leaped in joy when you wrote, "It was an extremely liberating feeling to just give up and give in, to accept who and what I was and stop denying myself." Good for you! And I'm thrilled for you when you write, "Friends and family accept and support me in this and things are moving along." Wonderful!

I am fairly certain you have heard all of these things before, but I do want you to know that I feel a great connection with your sense of isolation. I see you emerging into the light that self-acceptance brings, and have complete confidence that as you continue to embrace yourself with love, courage and strength, accepting the beauty and grandeur of your exceptional situation, you will emerge into full maturity as an equally exceptional human being.

I know you are not gay, but I am reminded of Oscar Wilde, Andre Gide, Quentin Crisp, Christopher Isherwood, Jean Genet, and numerous others who in the early days before Gay Liberation wrote of their lives with brilliance, sensitivity, and profound candor, celebrating their outsider position, writing with immense courage about their thoughts, feelings, lifestyles and the dangers they faced long before there was any united movement for social acceptance of gays. They were ahead of their time. They led the way and opened the doors and devoted their lives to expressing the beauty, pain and passion that on the one hand "afflicted" them, and that on the other hand fueled their creativity.

Perhaps you might be one of those who lead the way toward recognition, understanding and appreciation of transexuality in today's society, opening the doors of perception for those adolescents and young adults who follow in your footsteps, and for those "respectable" pillars of society who condemn you today, but tomorrow, with the proper understanding, will ultimately recognize you and others of your persuasion as human beings worthy of respect, appreciation and the dignity

accorded to all other members of the human species. You are intelligent; you write well; you feel your pain and hope and passionate struggles deeply. Who knows? Perhaps a great writer lives within you, yes?

Once again, let me thank you for confiding in me. My respect for you and your situation is unbounded, and I wanted you to know that.

All the best,

L

SL The Courage to Remain With “I Don’t Know”

. . . . Buddha from the very beginning, much to his credit, was never involved with questions about ultimate origins and destinies. He was concerned only with human suffering: what caused it, and how to alleviate it. *That* was the point. He knew then, what Shakespeare later put into a nutshell in *Julius Caesar* : “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in the stars but in ourselves.” For Buddha, gods, heavens, hells, angels, devils and other supernatural speculations were simply irrelevant to the questions Buddha addressed.

When he walked from town to town in Bihar, India, Buddha sent messengers ahead with fliers that itemized eleven questions that he would not entertain — questions about whether or not God exists; is there a heaven or a hell; what happens after life, etc. In other words, his concern was with the human mind, how it functions and why it fails to function in healthy ways, thus causing humanity's sufferings in the here and now.

He left metaphysical discussions to others, to people who felt the need to speculate, philosophize, interpret, wonder, hypothesize, theorize, etc. He did not blame our

miseries on a god or the gods, or on the transgressions of past lives revisiting us in this life (although reincarnation was an integral and virtually universal assumption in his time) or on any sort of “original sin” committed by previous generations.

Instead, he urged us to accept responsibility for our own happiness or misery; gave us insights to help us perceive the fundamental missteps we take that lead to psycho-spiritual disaster; and devised a series of principles and methodologies by which we might pierce through the illusions and delusions from which our miseries flower. He was one of the first down-to-earth, pragmatic, non-superstitious psycho-spiritual teachers the world has ever known.

. . . .Buddha was not the only one who urged us to accept mystery as a fundamental part of our lives; to see clearly, without fear; to recognize those phenomena that can be known and those that cannot; to bear up under the anxiety of not knowing various things that perhaps can be experienced but cannot be explained, and to refrain from imposing our own language, thought processes, definitions and conclusions upon that which the rational mind cannot grasp. There is the known, he said. There is the unknown which someday will be known. And there is the unknowable. The wise person sees which is which. There have been many wise ones throughout history, including Lao Tzu, for example.

Lao Tzu's most famous words about the all-encompassing Tao were: “The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal Name.” He spoke of the eternal mystery — Tao, the Unified One from which the universe's multitude of specifics emerge — as the Unknowable Source, saying, “It is not a feeling that can be conjured up in liturgy. It is not a riddle that can be solved intellectually. It is not a concept that can be captured in science or philosophy. It is not a dogma that can be formulated in Theology. It is not something lurking in the ultra-depths of our psyche. . . . And yet it is all of these, for all things come from it, and all things return to it.”

You clearly and undoubtedly have had non-rational experiences that have changed your life. I would enjoin you to experience these kinds of sensations courageously, with love, self-compassion and patience, without being too quick to attribute them to supernatural forces, phantasms, or immaterial and invisible anthropomorphic beings (which may indeed exist, although we presently may not be able to prove it).

It is not easy to hang out in the “I don't know” zone, of course, but you *can* do it if you choose to. Appreciate the fact that your subconscious constitutes *nine tenths* of your mind, and that quite often the very things we think are supremely real on an objective level are intensely vibrant projections of our deeply felt subjective loves, fears, hopes and dreams — unconscious precisely because they emerge from domains beneath rational awareness as efforts to codify non-rational experiences in objective, rational terms, thereby alleviating the mind's anxiety created by “I don't know.”

We can deny that observation all we want, of course, but there is much truth in it. You may not *know* what it is you are experiencing in any give situation, but that in no way diminishes *the reality* of the feelings or sensations you may be having. Perhaps there is no need to posit a ghost or a previous lifetime of good or bad karma in order to recognize that the life-changing realizations you are experiencing may be your own, not another's. You don't have to see them as coming from outside of you in order for them to have experiential validity.

Whatever we wish to call these sensations and experiences, they become truly real to you if you live in harmony with them, especially if you take courage in hand, recognize in the moment what kinds of efforts your otherwise rational mind may be making, and refrain from giving in to the temptation to objectify those experiences and impose upon them a linguistic label or category that may satisfy the mind's needy demands for answers, however speculative or illusory those labels and answers may be.

intelligence, insight, and aplomb than I. You seem to be happy and well-situated within the Christian framework, and clearly you are offering considerable consolation, hope, and edifying imagery to those who attend your talks. You do not seem to have doubts about your thinking, and do not indicate any sense of disillusionment regarding the various beliefs involved, so I see no reason to disturb the waters, do you? I value your sense of comfort and well-being. I value the loving personal relationship we share. In some contexts, talk is good; in others, love and appreciation are better.

Your question, however, does suggest that you might want to explore other “rooms in the mansion.” If that is the case in fact, you might want to read some of the people I have mentioned along the way, including Osho, Wilber, Krishnamurti, and Sam Harris. If you think any of these authors might open a few new doors for you, and you wish to examine yourself and the various issues further, I would be willing to steer you to specific books here and there that might help.

Otherwise, it seems to me you have found a way that works for you and your listeners. I think that is wonderful. In my view, your own heartsong is the key. You feel it deeply and share it with other people, and that heartsong brings light into the room. With love and compassion, you walk the talk, as they say. To me, that is the most important ingredient.

I see no reason for you to peek outside of those parameters (unless you feel a serious need to do so, of course, but I don't sense that). Your orientation assuages anxiety, masks doubt, and brings a sort of peacefulness to your mind and heart. You share that peacefulness with others. In today's world, that peace of mind is to be treasured, is it not? You feel a deep reverence for life. To my way of thinking, that is profoundly positive.

You are performing a service for those who share your needs and assumptions. I don't see that there is anything I could add or suggest from my perspective that

would be productive or helpful in your life at this time. Maybe some day, but not now.

Just know that I am with you and wish you well, yes?

All the very best,

Lee