

TRUSTING THE PROCESS:
THE DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCE OF
PSYCHOSPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

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Matthew L. Spalding

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read TRUSTING THE PROCESS: THE DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCE OF PSYCHOSPIRITUAL GUIDANCE, by Matthew L. Spalding, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Frank Echenhofer, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Core Faculty, School of Professional Psychology

David Lukoff, Ph.D., Committee Member
Core Faculty, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology

Matthew L. Spalding
California Institute of Integral Studies, 2008
Committee Chair: Frank Echenhofer, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

Human beings have utilized diverse forms of inner and outer guidance in service of psychological and spiritual development throughout history and across cultures to learn, heal, teach, transform, and awaken. Although psychospiritual guidance has featured prominently in spiritual teaching texts, there have been few systematic analyses or empirical studies of it in the discipline of psychology. The present exploration, which focuses on the individual experience of the maturation of psychospiritual guidance, is situated in a transpersonal theoretical framework, adopting a worldview that acknowledges the importance of both psychological and spiritual growth in healthy human development. Methodologically, I employ in this study a qualitative thematic analysis approach facilitated by computer software to distill common themes that systematically reveal experiential aspects of this phenomenon, drawing upon transcripts from original semi-structured in-depth interviews with 8 accomplished practitioners from amongst four influential psychospiritual traditions: ayahuasca shamanism, Tibetan

Buddhism, Jungian psychology, and the Diamond Logos teachings. The study findings reveal a common overarching developmental sequence to the experience of cultivating or awakening to psychospiritual guidance: preparing for guidance, experiencing guidance, integrating guidance, and transcending guidance. Various experiences by the study participants as a lucid state of awareness, a supportive dynamic force, a spirit messenger, or an inner or outer guru, psychospiritual guidance includes both internal and external sources of guidance in service of ultimate awakening to one's true nature. This awakening culminates in the embodied recognition of one's interconnectedness with everything, experienced as either nondual consciousness or communion with a divine source. The essential Self can thus be interpreted as an individualized expression of undifferentiated and absolute awareness, incorporating an innate guidance system that orients the individual towards the source of its Being and the opportunity to abide in an awareness of ultimate reality. My aim is to contribute to a more refined understanding in the psychological literature of the nuanced experiential dimensions of this innate human capacity for psychospiritual guidance. This understanding may both help individuals to more effectively adapt psychospiritual practices of the past to contemporary contexts and promote greater personal, clinical, and academic interest in this topic in the modern West.

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DEDICATION

My immeasurable gratitude extends to my mother, father, and brother, steadfast beacons in my life of unwavering love, faith, and support. I dedicate this exploration to the awakening of everyone to their highest guidance, that we may all give and receive the inspiration and encouragement we need so as to shine our brightest in service of the benefit of our fellow beings. And with most special affection to my niece and nephew, Eve Ruane and Luke Oliver Ames, that you may always navigate by your own trusted stars in your precious journeys home.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us. And when we bring what is within us out into the world, miracles happen” (Emerson, 1841, p. 20).

Introduction to Psychospiritual Guidance

In the current study, the term *psychospiritual guidance* designates both personal and transpersonal sources of support unveiled by human beings through various ancient and contemporary psychological and spiritual practices, referred to here as psychospiritual disciplines. Such guidance has played a pervasive and instrumental role throughout history, aiding human beings in discovering universal truths and shaping uniquely personal pathways to learn, heal, teach, transform, and awaken. Whether experienced as an inner or outer source of wisdom, psychospiritual guidance invariably encourages psychological and spiritual health and maturation. In many wisdom traditions, this developmental phenomenon culminates in the experiential recognition of the interconnectedness of all things, be that interpreted as nondual awareness or communion with a divine source.

Many individuals throughout history have reported encounters with emanations of guidance in both the material and non-material realms manifesting in the service of growth and revelation. In addition to consulting sages and mentors, for millennia shamans have sought and received support from helping spirits, Buddhists have realized the

wisdom of deities and the awakening of the inner guru, and divine *murtis* have assisted Hindu spiritual seekers in their search for ultimate truth. The mystic Christian Desert Fathers heeded sacred visions and the Holy Spirit, and Quakers have long listened to the “still small voice within” (Smith, 1998; Walsh, 2007). Moses followed the voice of the Holy Spirit, Mohammed accompanied the angel Gabriel through the seven heavens to know the divine, the Greeks appealed to the winged Hermes for guidance, and Socrates, Goethe, Yeats, and Gandhi all held ongoing dialogues with personal *daemons* (Walsh, 1990, p. 132). More recently, Jungians have rekindled an interest in dream work and transpersonal entities in the field of Western psychology, while contemporary practitioners of the Diamond Approach and Diamond Logos teachings have sought to attune directly to the dynamism of Being as a reliable source of guidance.

Others have experienced less relational, yet distinctly embodied, manifestations of guidance, including a host of experiences variously known in the transpersonal literature as *intuition, inner wisdom, divine or soul guidance, inner seeing, direct knowing, inner compass navigation, remembrance, and revelation*. The construct of guidance can thus be seen to be a multileveled and multifaceted phenomenon, giving rise to a similarly wide range of experiences. In his comments upon intuition, psychiatrist Arthur Deikman (as cited in Palmer, 1998) can be seen to speak to the phenomenon of guidance in general:

The basic concept of intuition is ancient. Throughout history, human beings have had the experience of knowing more than what was given them by their senses. They have attributed such unexplained knowledge either to divine intervention, as in the case of prophecy, or to a special quasi-

magical ability possessed by only a few individuals, such as clairvoyants or great scientists. This “gift” was long considered to be the property of gods or spirits, not the heritage of ordinary men and women. Few people considered the possibility that such sporadic instances of intuition might be lower-order manifestations of a capacity that could be developed until it became a reliable channel of knowing. (p. 177)

As with intuition, guidance capacities may be awakened and strengthened by a variety of ancient practices that have only recently been rediscovered. According to transpersonal and shamanic scholar Roger Walsh (2007), “Many religions and some psychologies recognize the possibility of accessing wisdom from inner sources that seem wiser than the ego. Indeed, considerable effort has gone into refining methods for facilitating this access” (p. 144). Transpersonal author Helen Palmer (1998) enumerates some of these efforts:

there are many technologies that have been employed throughout the ages to support different methods of paying attention [to inner knowing]...such as attending to body signals, dreamwork, empathy, intuitive hunches, imagination, meditation, and trance. (p. xiv)

Why, however, the need for guidance in the first place? Guidance to or from where? By or with whom? Indeed, the word “guidance” itself conjures associations of being adrift and in need of assistance. According to A. H. Almaas (2002), co-founder of the Diamond Approach teachings, the need for guidance arises when we lose ourselves in illusory phenomena:

We all need guidance. We need it because we are lost. Without guidance, we will just move from being lost to being lost. Trial and error doesn't necessarily work, even if we have unlimited time, which we don't. So when a person finds guidance, internal or external, that person is fortunate, blessed. And generally speaking, people who are cynical

about guidance just keep getting more lost, and don't even know what they're missing. (p. 209)

The ultimate aim of psychospiritual guidance is to direct one's experience to an embodied recognition of unitive awareness, realizing one's potential for seeing through the illusion of duality and personal separateness. While nondual awareness seems to be a wholly esoteric experience, transpersonal psychologist Abraham Maslow (1971) discovered in his study of self-actualizing individuals that it is in fact far more common than most people tend to realize:

While this transcendence of dichotomy can be seen as a usual thing in self-actualizing persons, it can also be seen in most of the rest of us in our most acute moments of integration within the self and between self and the world. In the highest love between man and woman, or a parent and child, as the person reaches the ultimates of strength, self-esteem, or ideality, so also does he simultaneously merge with the other, lose self-consciousness and more or less transcend the self and selfishness. The same can happen in the creative moment, in the profound aesthetic experience, in the insight experience...and others which I have generalized as peak experiences. (pp. 158-159)

Much has been written about the increasingly fragile nature of global conditions due to unprecedented symptoms of environmental, social, psychological, and spiritual imbalance (Berry, 2006; Capra, 2004; Korten, 2007; Macy, 2007). Although it is not appropriate here to elaborate on such urgent and well-articulated calls to individual and collective awakening, this body of scholarship supports my belief that psychospiritual guidance has a timely and relevant role to play as humans address these critical ecological concerns. In Palmer's words,

we are moved to retrieve dimensions of knowing that we wouldn't ordinarily consider, simply because the limitations of intellectualism have become so apparent. Without

rejecting its scientific orientation, Western culture is beginning to explore the royal road to hidden wisdom, mapped in the technologies of sacred tradition. (p. 4)

Although many spiritual texts point out the essential contributions of psychospiritual guidance on the path of discovery, there remains a notable paucity of empirical psychological research to enrich and expand this esoteric knowledge base. To date, little is known about the experiential aspects of psychospiritual guidance in its wide variety of manifestations, particularly among contemporary Westerners. The present research study—which reviews the prominent theoretical literature on this topic in its manifestations across several traditions and discusses its relationship to original empirical data—is among the first to systematically and cross-culturally investigate the spiritual phenomenon of psychospiritual guidance from a psychological perspective. In so doing, I am seeking to make exoteric in the psychological domain of scholarship and clinical practice a phenomenon that is often secreted away in esoteric practices limited to select circles of disciples or practitioners.

Purpose of Study

The specific aim of this dissertation is to illuminate the development of the lived experience of psychospiritual guidance among 8 practitioners in the four wisdom traditions of ayahuasca shamanism, Tibetan Buddhism, Jungian psychology, and the Diamond teachings by conducting a thematic analysis of their interview responses on the subject. (For the initial theoretical portion of this study, the differences between the Diamond Approach and Diamond Logos teachings, contemporary

psychospiritual teachings that branch from the same co-founders and source tradition, are seen to be largely negligible. Unless their distinction is being highlighted, the two schools of thought will thus be jointly referenced as “the Diamond teachings.”)

I have selected these traditions because they explicitly highlight the experience of psychospiritual guidance in their literature. Given the relative scarcity of research on psychospiritual guidance, it appears that this source of wisdom is most often dismissed, or at best ignored, in the modern Western worldview. My intention here is both to shed some initial light upon this complex phenomenon and to invite more nuanced appreciation of its multidimensional nature by articulating its experiential attributes in more precise language.

After reviewing prominent scholarship from the four traditions and conducting participant interviews, I generated and analyzed data culled from the interview transcripts; each tradition is represented by at least 2 experienced practitioners. Those interviewed were deemed capable of reliably recognizing and attuning to some form of guidance and of articulating their experience in the language of Western psychology. This study was designed to survey the territory of the experience of psychospiritual guidance, gleaning themes grounded in the experiences of its participants with the aim of contributing to the further codification of those aspects of guidance that can be understood through articulation and categorization. Although drawing from a small participant sample with limited diversity, four traditions nonetheless provide a relatively wide

breadth of inquiry for a study seeking to make initial sense of a complex experiential phenomenon.

As this is an exploratory study with a small group of participants, it is not intended to serve as definitive in how the selected traditions view and work with guidance. Similarly, I do not assume that this research will be predictive in making broad generalizations; its function is as an initial exploration and exposition of important themes in the experience of psychospiritual guidance. Its chief contribution will be in helping to lay the foundation for future transpersonal research of a phenomenon worthy of expansion and substantiation. Although the present study will undoubtedly leave many aspects of this phenomenon unresolved, my central concern here—and the one I see to be most relevant today for the field of psychology—is to derive a nuanced understanding of the development of psychospiritual guidance as a lived experience from a qualitative research perspective. This understanding will inform future researchers who wish to carry out more specific qualitative and quantitative explorations on this subject matter.

In summary, the current research and findings contribute (a) an initial sketch of some prominent facets of the phenomenon of psychospiritual guidance across diverse traditional contexts, providing empirical research data as a foundation for future study; (b) replacement of inadequate research procedures with specific and adequate methods for research in this particular topic; (c) additional personal narratives to the research literature about the phenomenon to better balance extant theory; (d) an explanation of the ways in which the phenomenon supports healthy

and therapeutic states and psychospiritual development in general; e) suggestions for future research; and (f) suggestions towards newly embodied and participatory ways of approaching transpersonal research.

I am lettering and ordering the appendices both in the text and the appendices section in a way that emphasizes a greater detailed understanding of the methodology process and results findings. In order to deepen the reader's nuanced appreciation of this study's research findings I am thus diverging from standard APA formatting, which recommends that the appendices be presented in the order they are introduced in the text.

Deikman (as cited in Palmer, 1998) reminds us, "The basic problem for philosophers, psychologists, and everyone else is that they cannot be convinced of the reality of something they have not experienced" (p. 182). In lieu of such direct knowledge, it is my hope that the stories of lived experience provided by the participants in this inquiry will provide others with a bridge to deeper personal understanding.

Tentative Hypotheses

This study considers the possibilities that (a) an awakened state of nondual awareness that is our true nature does in fact exist; (b) that we are lost in duality when this natural state is not recognized, generating the fundamental problem of suffering; and (c) that such an awakening can occur with the assistance of a phenomenon or phenomena that I am defining as "psychospiritual guidance." I also hold the perspective, prevalent in the research literature, that the dynamic individual and

universal forces of creation are interdependent expressions of the same evolving consciousness, manifesting in the generative unfolding of the mind and cosmos.

Based upon the numerous spiritual texts that speak to its reality, I thus assume that the existence of psychospiritual guidance is plausible, and further that its manifestations across time and various cultures may hold a key to many secrets of the internal landscape of psychological and spiritual transformation. Although it is possible that a human being's awakening to truth is not in fact guided, but simply happens in and of itself, I presuppose that the cited traditions may be correct in presuming that there is often a guiding process involved in psychospiritual maturation. This study is unique in its psychospiritual examination of several aspects of guidance in light of newly generated interview data. This examination is, however, an initial inquiry rather than a definitive test of a hypothesis or of particular transpersonal assumptions.

Four Psychospiritual Traditions

The selection of ayahuasca shamanism, Vajrayana Buddhism, Jungian psychology, and the Diamond teachings as expository traditions for guidance is significant for several reasons: (a) all four traditions offer great depth and scope of information about psychospiritual guidance; (b) three of the four traditions have been engaging in a rich conversation in Western scholarship over the past 30 years (the exception being the more recently developed Diamond teachings), providing extensive literature in the English language and offering an ample theoretical contextual

foundation in scholarly literature; (c) it is possible to locate viable informants from each of these traditions in the San Francisco Bay Area of California, where each tradition enjoys widespread popularity of instruction and practice; and (d) the four psychospiritual traditions were of particular personal interest to this writer upon initiating the study.

The traditions examined here span a wide historical range, dating back at least 40,000 years for shamanism, 2500 years for Buddhism, a century for Jungian psychology, and a quarter century for the Diamond teachings (Gagan, 1998; Krippner & Combs, 2002). The shamanic tradition may be viewed as the predecessor of all the traditions included in this study, since “Shamanism has been considered the first form of evolution of human consciousness to the transpersonal levels” (Winkelman, 2000, p. 223). Not only does pan-global shamanism historically predate the other traditions, but each of the others explicitly draws upon shamanic principles and practices. Indeed, shamanic scholar Michael Winkelman (2002) asserts that shamanism has played a fundamental role in global cultural and personal human evolution, especially in the domains of cognitive integration, self-transformation, and healing capacities.

Tibetan Buddhism is rooted in the shamanic culture of Tibet, drawing many of its ritual and symbolic aesthetics and practices from its *Bön* roots. Carl Jung (1967) in turn took a great interest in the worldviews and practices of both shamanism and Buddhism, though in his writings he apparently did not reference the South American ritual use of ayahuasca, the form of shamanism explored in this study. The Diamond teachings meanwhile draw significantly upon Tibetan Buddhism, with periodic

reference to Jungian psychology (Almaas, 2004). Although each tradition has unique teachings, they all serve the goal of awakening to the truth of our psychological and spiritual nature.

This study is not concerned with the entire scope of these four traditions, but only with those dimensions that speak directly to the cultivation, manifestation, and integration of guidance as a means of achieving awareness of authentic identity. One goal of this research is to offer the interview transcripts themselves and my own analysis of prominent aspects of psychospiritual guidance for the benefit of future scholars and practitioners. I also hope to convey a sense of the multiple ways in which such guidance may manifest itself as a way of clarifying misapprehensions or limited understanding of this important phenomenon.

Although psychospiritual guidance is often utilized in practices described as spiritual, it also qualifies as a psychological phenomenon in that it involves psychological processes. The clinical relevance of psychospiritual guidance will be further addressed in the Conclusion section, though for the time being guidance may be understood to be especially helpful in supporting individuals in responding more mindfully to inner sources of information, rather than habitually reacting to external phenomena. The value of psychospiritual guidance is also clearly apparent in promoting agency, a human capacity that has a long history of study in the field of psychology. A more refined understanding of the experiential dimensions of guidance may additionally help individuals adapt psychospiritual practices to our modern era in the

service of psychological individuation, spiritual awakening, and enriching theoretical and practical approaches to transcultural and transpersonal psychologies and psychotherapies.

The following Literature Review section has three main purposes. It begins with a brief introduction to psychospiritual guidance, orienting the reader to its historical and contemporary significance in human development and offering a concise overview of how this dissertation is embedded within the history of psychospiritual research. I then introduce the transpersonal theoretical framework, which provides a rationale for the psychospiritual worldview within which this study is situated. Finally, the review of the literature provides an overview of how each of the four wisdom traditions under examination articulates and contextualizes guidance as a significant source of personal and transpersonal support.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

“The knowledge of man is as the waters, some descending from above, and some springing from beneath; the one informed by the light of nature, the other inspired by divine revelation” (Sir Francis Bacon as cited in Guenther, 1989, p. 196).

Overview of the Psychospiritual Worldview

Psyche and Spirit

This dissertation is situated within a psychospiritual framework, positing an innate value in attending to the integration of the human psyche and spirit. By assuming this syncretic perspective, I see a clear value in acknowledging the distinct and symbiotic domains of psychological and spiritual development and their accompanying practices. The word *psyche* derives from the Greek *psukhe* for breath, life, or soul, originally referring to that which animates the physical body. In contemporary psychological language, *psyche* refers to the mind, that which functions as the center of thought, emotion, and behavior, consciously and unconsciously mediating the self and the body (Berghash & Jillson, 1998).

Spirit has its roots in the Latin *spiritus* for breath, also initially describing the vital force inspiring life. In modern usage the word *spirit* typically refers to a sentient being’s incorporeal consciousness, that which ultimately supports the functions of the brain and psyche, the Mind that

generates the mind (Berghash & Jillson, 1998). Though the etymological meanings of psyche and spirit are nearly identical, their common modern meanings offer a useful way to approach distinct yet symbiotic facets of human development.

I define egoic consciousness here as relating to a separate sense of self, or states of awareness confined to the limits of personal identity. In the psychological realm the ego is perceived to be a positive phenomenon, describing a wide variety of cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes essential to healthy survival. “Personal” concerns are likely to benefit from a therapeutic framework where emotional and relational needs are explicitly addressed on a consistent basis, prioritizing a gradual path of healing over dramatic peaks of experience. Basic psychological abilities such as learning to tolerate stress and disappointment are also essential for intensive spiritual practice. To risk venturing into the unknown and leaving behind the safety of one’s familiar identity—a threshold crossing endemic to any intensive psychospiritual practice—one must first have a realistic and compassionate attitude towards oneself, along with the requisite courage, openness, and resilience that are hallmarks of a healthy ego (Trungpa, 2002; Welwood, 2000).

The central tenets of contemporary transpersonal and psychospiritual perspectives will be used in this dissertation, drawing chiefly upon the scholarship of Michael Washburn, Ken Wilber, Brant Cortright, and Carl Jung. From this vantage point, while psychology seeks to intervene on the level of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, spirituality addresses the source and foundation of the bio-psycho-social activities

that take this sense of separateness for granted. In so doing, spiritual practice aims towards the eradication of suffering and awakening to ultimate reality, explorations into the unknown that are not possible as long as the ego remains master of the mind. While the ego is managing such domains as relationship and work, the soul or spirit is engaged in dismantling the psyche's attachments and aversions to these very experiences, realizing that all are eventual fetters to a realization of impartial awareness and universal concern. It is of course paradoxical that psychotherapeutic processes that invest their time fortifying the ego may be employed alongside spiritual practices that aim to leave the ego behind. This seeming contradiction is famously encapsulated in the maxim of long-time psychotherapist and meditator Jack Engler, "You have to be somebody before you can be nobody" (Cohen, 2000, p. 96).

Spiritual Bypassing and Psychological Reductionism

Those who seek to transcend their ego without having first developed a healthy relationship to it may be at risk of "spiritual bypassing" (Welwood, 2000). This term refers to circumventing unresolved psychological issues in order to prematurely transcend painful aspects of personal experience and development. Such bypassing often takes the form of cloaking defensive avoidance in spiritual garb, such as feeling one is "beyond" mundane concerns or unpleasant emotional and social realities that eventually must be accepted and addressed (Cortright, 1997). Vajrayana master Chögyam Trungpa meanwhile coined the term

“spiritual materialism” to convey a related risk of adopting a newly fashioned identity based upon accumulated spiritual beliefs and practices, serving only to further strengthen egocentricity and sidetrack authentic spiritual development in increasingly subtle ways (Trungpa, 2002, p. 3).

Spiritual practices may be employed to evade unwanted responsibilities, motivated by the belief that enlightenment experiences will vanquish neurotic tendencies and that spiritual practice by itself can stand in for healthy psychological development. Temporary spiritual experiences rarely, if ever, however, fully free the self from deeply entrenched psychological conflicts or the wounding influence of early trauma (Caplan, 1999). In the words of spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen, “Deep-rooted psychological issues and clinically-diagnosed personality disorders are better suited for psychotherapeutic intervention than spiritual practice” (Cohen, 2000, p. 18).

The field of transpersonal psychology generally assumes that many Eastern teachings do not adequately address many of the emotional and psychological predispositions of many Westerners, citing this as an important reason to adopt a hybrid psychospiritual approach to understanding consciousness (Caplan, 1999, 2002; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993a, 1993b). Eastern spiritual teachers may take for granted a healthy psyche as a foundation for spiritual development without explicitly addressing psychological problems related to early ego development or traumatic experience. For many Westerners, however, the act of prematurely jettisoning the ego can result in a dysfunctional expression of

spirituality in which unresolved personal needs are disregarded in service of transcendent ideals.

Conversely, a major risk of ignoring the spiritual side of the developmental spectrum is what pan-religious scholar Huston Smith calls “psychological reductionism.” Such a reductionist view denigrates the sacred by positing scientific materialism as the ultimate reality. Smith (1976) sees this paradigmatic error as akin to taking the base of a mountain for its entirety when viewed through a partially raised blind. “The mistake of reductionism—spirit reduced to metamorphosed matter” he writes, “lies in its attempt to explain the greater in terms of the less, with the not surprising consequence that the greater is thereby lessened” (p. 41). Palmer (1998) similarly warns against minimizing “inner knowing” experiences, inviting contemporary Westerners to engage in increasingly available spiritual practices in order to enhance them:

Westerners who have moments of direct inner knowing often suppress its memory, or rationalize it away, or remember what happened as a once-in-a-lifetime peak experience. There is, however, another choice for those who feel themselves blessed by glimpsing even a crack in the door leading to nondual perception. In this generation, the technologies of sacred tradition are freely available to anyone who is drawn to explore a greater consciousness. (p. xxi)

Overview of Transpersonal Theory

Within its psychospiritual worldview this study builds specifically upon the tradition of transpersonal psychology, recognizing that psychology and spirituality are complementary in their mutual aim of liberating distinct dimensions of consciousness from restrictive

conditioning via their respective clinical and sacred technologies.

“Transpersonal psychology in this sense affords a wider perspective for all the learning of conventional psychology. It includes and exceeds traditional psychology” (Cortright, 1997, p. 10). Transpersonal theory is a relatively new lens through which to view human development, in which psychology and spirituality benefit from collaboration (Cortright, 1997; Walsh, 1993; Washburn, 1994, 1995). According to transpersonal theorist Michael Washburn (1995),

Transpersonal theory is not a one-sided psychology of religion or an exclusively spiritual psychology. It is rather a project that attempts a true synthesis of spiritual and psychological perspectives, a synthesis that involves a thorough rethinking of each of these perspectives in terms of the other. (p. 1)

In a sense, such a bifocal perspective is inevitable for modern spiritual practitioners. Given the psychological sophistication of modern Western culture, many contemporary spiritual practitioners could in fact be seen to hold a transpersonal perspective. Most Western Buddhists, for example, might actually be better described as exhibiting a spiritual worldview defined by both Buddhism and psychology. In the words of transpersonal theorist Brant Cortright (1997),

Both spiritual and psychological traditions speak to what we are, to what is wrong with the human condition, and to the transformative possibilities open to us. A comprehensive theory of transpersonal psychology strives to integrate the world’s spiritual and psychological approaches into a new whole and tried to find a common, underlying methodology for producing growth and change...this psychospiritual framework provides the widest, most inclusive theoretical framework for transpersonal psychology, within which more specific approaches such as Wilber, Jung, Washburn, Grof, and other theorists, can be situated. (pp. 25-26)

While mainstream Western psychology might interpret all inner or spiritual sources of information as sub-personalities belonging to the psyche, a “trans-personal” perspective deems such availability of support to exist “across *and* beyond” the personal identity of the ego. Although this study distinguishes between the personal and transpersonal domains, the transpersonal realms can be interpreted to include “both the personal and what lies beyond it” (Cortright, 1997, p. 10). Walsh (2007) meanwhile highlights the unique contributions of the transpersonal dimensions to human experience by emphasizing their transcendence of egoic capacities:

From a psychological perspective we can account for inner guides and channeling if we recognize transpersonal aspects of the psyche. In this view, inner guides...would be creations of transpersonal facets of mind “above and beyond” the ego, such as Psychosynthesis’ “higher unconscious,” Aurobindo’s intuitive mind,” Tibetan Buddhist “yidams,” or certain Jungian archetypes. However, psychological explanations do not disprove the existence of spirits (intelligent, non-material entities independent of the channel’s mind)...In fact, the nature of “spirits” may be one of the great puzzles at the heart of shamanism. (p. 147)

Washburn and Wilber

In the psychological tradition, this dissertation frames its inquiry within the scholarship of transpersonal theorist Michael Washburn. Washburn’s (1995) transpersonal paradigm of human development is congruous with Jungian depth psychology. It is, however, conspicuously at odds with the perspective of prominent transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber, who provides an alternative model to Washburn’s theory of development. Relative to the inquiry of this dissertation, Washburn and

Wilber may have arrived at a theoretical stalemate due to their incompatible a priori views of development as resembling either a spiral or a staircase in nature, respectively. To surmount this theoretical impasse or find a common ground between these views, primary data from additional empirical research into transpersonal development is needed (Cortright, 1997; Washburn, 1982, 1986; Wilber, 1990, 2000). According to Buddhist meditation teacher Jack Kornfield (2000),

When we compare a linear ascending path with a spiral unfolding, we find two quite different conceptions of spiritual fulfillment. The linear path holds up an idealistic vision of the perfected human...[in which] all greed, anger, fear, judgment, delusion, personal ego and desire are uprooted forever, completely eliminated . . . The more circular vision of enlightenment presents freedom as a shift of identity. In this vision, too, we awaken to our true nature, and rest in a timeless freedom of spirit...[though] the ordinary patterns of life may continue. (p. 123)

To highlight the contrasts between Washburn's and Wilber's theories as they pertain to psychospiritual guidance, I am intentionally drawing attention to aspects of their theories that emphasize their polemic. I am thus deliberately choosing not to look at the several accommodations Wilber (1990, 2000) has made to respond to Washburn's model over their years of dialogue. Rather, to provide a theoretical foil to Washburn's metaphor of the spiral, I am characterizing Wilber as a linear stage developmental theorist, with the understanding that his more recent writings have addressed certain limitations of such a model. For the reader's interest, the latest of Wilber's models that take into account Washburn's critiques of his work can be found in Wilber's *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (2000).

Wilber (2000) views spirituality as both a distinct capacity that develops alongside other capacities and a developmental stage determining the maturation of all other realms of experience. His “structural-hierarchical” paradigm of development as various “lines or streams” suggests a straight-ascent model of evolution. Regression, for example, would be theoretically impossible according to this model of development, in which higher stages incorporate lower ones and all levels of maturation include previous levels. Wilber also favors an injunction procedure of spiritual development; i.e., one relies upon an outer guide’s authoritative instruction without interpretation or improvisation, thus having no need for any form of internal guidance. In Wilber’s (1996) understanding, “if you want to know what these [spiritually accomplished] men and women are actually talking about, then you must take up the contemplative practice or injunction or paradigm, and perform the experiment yourself” (p. 217).

Wilber’s model is aligned with certain Eastern traditions of spiritual development that may be perceived as incompatible with psychospiritual guidance, since they represent an exclusively nondual approach to psychospiritual development. Such non-process-oriented approaches are likely to ignore guidance phenomena as incidental byproducts of experience, if recognizing their legitimate existence at all. Because I have not situated the present study within Wilber’s model of development, I am not focusing on his theoretical perspective. It should be noted, however, that Wilber’s developmental stages of “vision-logic” and “the centaur” have features that may be analogous to realms of guidance

discussed in this study (Wilber, 2000). As Wilber has not discussed in detail how these stages of consciousness manifest in lived experience, the current study's research data could potentially be instrumental in informing that endeavor.

Washburn (1995) posits that the mind is rooted in a *Dynamic Ground* that is the generative field of all experience. This genetically inherited field includes the instinctual, imaginal, and nondual planes of awareness, as well as material from both the personal and collective unconscious. Washburn's vision shares much in common with Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, which harbors both universal memory and patterns for new creation. For Washburn, as with Jung, the deepest authority of truth resides within the aspirant, who must inevitably unearth his own truth from the Dynamic Ground within.

Washburn (1995) writes,

[My view] is much closer to the views of Jung, Grof, and Levin than it is to Wilber's view... Basically, I think Wilber loses sight of the transpersonal potentials of the deep unconscious and consequently mistakenly conceives the course of (ontogenetic) development as a straight ascent to higher levels rather than as a spiral loop that, after departing from origins, bends back through origins on the way to transpersonal integration. Similar to the views of Jung, Grof, and Levin, the view presented here is one that postulates the existence of an original, dynamic, creative, spontaneous source out of which the ego emerges, from which the ego then becomes estranged, to which, during the stages of ego transcendence, the ego returns, and with which, ultimately, the ego is integrated . . . The underlying paradigm is substantially the same. (p. 4)

Washburn (1995) here refers to his notion of "regression in service of transcendence," which involves periodic revisitation and integration of less developed aspects of consciousness in the task of moving beyond

strictly egoic concerns. Like Wilber, Washburn's (1995) "dynamic-dialectical" model sees consciousness as consisting of the three strata of pre-egoic, egoic, and trans-egoic, which can also be understood as prepersonal, personal, and transpersonal stages of development. Unlike Wilber, however, Washburn perceives the pre-egoic and trans-egoic realms to be one and the same; the critical difference resides not in the domains themselves, but in how conscious one is of her or his experience of them. For Washburn (1995), the psyche is possessed of an intrinsic polarity of which the prepersonal and transpersonal are thus lower and higher expressions of the same nonegoic potential. Jungian scholarship supports this postulation of the Self as the source of all awareness preceding the advent of the ego. Jungian scholar Erich Neumann (as cited in Edinger, 1972), for example, interprets

symbolically the original psychic state prior to the birth of ego consciousness as the ouroboros, using the circular image of the tail-eater to represent the primordial Self, the original mandala-state of totality out of which the individual ego is born. (p. 4)

Seeking to reconcile the model of psychoanalysis with that of Jung's depth psychology, Washburn (1995) articulates the psyche as oscillating between the binary polarities of the egoic and nonegoic, incorporating both pre- and trans-personal experience in the nonegoic pole:

If human development is an interplay between the two poles of the polar structure, however, it is by no means always a balanced or harmonious interplay. On the contrary, according to the dynamic-dialectical paradigm, the two psychic poles are never in a state of parity, and they are harmoniously related only at the very beginning and end of human development, the first year and a half of the pre-

egoic (or body-egoic) stage, and in the transegoic stage of development. Through most of human development, the two psychic poles are neither equal nor balanced in their relation to each other. (p. 11)

Washburn (1995) posits that the nonegoic pole of the Dynamic Ground lies at the foundation of the perception of duality, including form and dynamism, mind and body, thought and feeling, logic and creativity, and self-control and spontaneity (p. 11). He also makes it clear that bringing the egoic and nonegoic poles into balance is not assuming their equality. Rather, he posits,

the two psychic poles are inherently unequal: the nonegoic pole is superior in both power and authority. This superiority is evident whenever the egoic pole is open to the nonegoic pole, as is the case in both the preegoic and transegoic stages. In the preegoic stage...the nonegoic pole has a strong and frequently overpowering influence on a fledgling ego; and in the integrated stage the nonegoic pole, without any longer overpowering the ego, still possesses primacy in that it empowers, grounds, and guides the ego. (p. 18)

Although Washburn's conceptual paradigm is well suited to include guidance phenomena, his theoretical model does not give any attention to them and thus overlooks a potentially critical aspect of transpersonal development (Cortright, 1997; Washburn, 1995). In this study I aim to illuminate the experience of psychospiritual guidance, which in general is under-examined in the transpersonal psychology literature, in the particular context of Washburn's neo-Jungian theoretical framework.

Realms of Guidance

Pan-religious scholar Huston Smith describes four “planes” or “dimensions of existence” that are found in the *perennial philosophy*, Aldous Huxley’s name for “the common core of wisdom and practice at the mystical heart of the world’s great religions and perhaps first partly glimpsed by early shamans” (Huxley, 1945; Walsh, 1997, p. 259). Deikman (as cited in Palmer, 1998) concurs:

The unanimity of descriptions of intuited reality indicates that their experience is not idiosyncratic, but universal, and the parallel between their descriptions and the discoveries of modern physics supports the validity of the universal view” (p. 183).

Ordered from dense to subtle, these four dimensions include the “terrestrial,” “intermediate,” “celestial,” and “infinite” planes of consciousness. The terrestrial plane is the earthly realm that most of humanity takes as its conventional reality. The remaining three realms, in order of development, are considered to be transpersonal in nature.

The intermediate or psychic plane is that in which subtle energies take spiritual or energetic form and psi phenomena occur. The celestial plane “correlates with the realm of the Personal Divine, the spiritual reality that the world’s theistic-relational traditions refer to. This Divine Presence may be with or without form” (Cortright, 1997, p. 29). The infinite level, also referred to as the absolute or Impersonal Divine, is finally that of unitive awareness, the transcendence of dualistic experience. Wilber supports this four-tier formulation, citing the “gross,” “subtle,” “causal,” and “nondual” states of consciousness as

corresponding to the terrestrial, intermediate, celestial, and infinite levels of Smith's formulation (Wilber, 1977, 2000).

This study proposes that the diverse phenomena it is calling "inner guidance" manifest in the two middle realms of the intermediate and celestial planes of reality. Although guidance undoubtedly occurs in the terrestrial plane in such forms as relationships, experiences, and teachers, such support would more accurately qualify as "outer guidance." Conversely, at the infinite level of nondual union with the absolute origin of manifestation, in which the relational dimensions of guidance have been integrated and transcended, there is no longer the need or ability to experience relational forms of guidance, as there is no longer anywhere to go or anything or anyone to relate to. However, it is unclear from the research literature if such a unitive state of consciousness can still be considered an embodiment of the guidance principle. Both the material and nondual realms are thus also included in this study's overarching conceptualization of psychospiritual guidance.

As there are two realms in which "inner" guidance manifests, two general forms of such guidance may be likely to emerge from the interview data. On the subtle plane psychospiritual guidance typically arrives in an embodied energetic form, appearing as an intermediary emissary to transmit information and support. On the causal level, however, guidance may be less explicitly dialectical in nature, approaching the infinite convergence of the absolute or infinite plane of experience. Walsh (1990) describes subtle experiences as comprising

those faint images and sensations that tend to emerge when the more raucous mental contents are stilled; as, for example, in meditation. The experiences that arise may be with or without form...Archetypal figures symbolizing transpersonal and spiritual qualities may arise, such as images of sages, angels, or Buddhas. Such experiences may be stably accessed. (p. 236)

Jungian scholar Jeffrey Raff (2000) elaborates on this conceptualization of subtle experience, distinguishing between relationships with inner and psychoidal figures in imaginal experience:

There is the normal human world of ordinary reality and there is the divine world that transcends reality as we know it. Between these worlds is the world of imagination, in which spirits and divinity Itself may personify themselves as imaginal figures. Since relating to the image is the same as relating to the entity itself, it is through imaginative experiences that the divinity may be known and transformed. There are two aspects of imaginal experience. The first relates to inner figures and occurs when some part of the unconscious personifies itself. The other relates to psychoidal figures and is the imaginal encounter with beings that have their own objective reality outside of the psyche. Within the first imaginative world, the self appears as a figure embodying the union of opposites within the psyche, as well as being the center of the psyche. The image of divinity, as it appears in the second imaginative realm, is closely related to the image of the self, and the two work together to effect a third level of union that joins the human being with God Itself. (p. 145)

As mentioned above, the present study is delimiting its theoretical framing of “inner” guidance to include such dialectical forms of manifestation that retain a form aspect even though they are non-material in nature. Examples of subtle level guidance in the four traditions as derived from the research literature include shamanism’s spirit encounters and psychopomp navigation, Buddhism’s deities and dakinis, Jungian daemons and symbols, and the Diamond teachings’ essential realm vehicles and states of awareness.

Almaas (2004) expounds upon the subtle realms of experience in the context of the Diamond Approach teachings, making reference to two distinct stages of the “illusory body”:

The subtle body is exactly what other traditions, even Western ones, including our view, refer to as the soul, which is a stream of awareness...The illusory body is then the clarified soul, for it is an awareness that is at the same time a dynamic presence and awareness inseparable from emptiness. The illusory body itself goes through a process, for it has two stages: the impure and pure illusory body, the latter connected with the vajra or Diamond Body...of Vajrayana practice. (p. 514)

Meanwhile, in the causal stage of transpersonal development, “There are no longer any objects or things in the field of awareness...Only awareness itself remains...This is the unmanifest realm or void in which no phenomena whatsoever appear” (Walsh, 1990, p. 237). In the words of Palmer (1998), “The sense of separation between ourselves and our environment disappears. Suddenly we’re suffused with the empty-headed clarity of our connection to nature that is so definite, so indelibly known to our being, that thought simply recedes” (pp. xix-xx). Although this sounds like the ultimate stage of potential awareness,

it is not the final realization. According to some traditions there lies beyond this a further stage [which is]...the ground out of which all previous stages and phenomena emerge. Here phenomena once again appear but are now recognized as creations and modifications of consciousness, Spirit or Mind...[which] has rediscovered its true nature, returned to its Self as its Self, and recognizes its Self in all things. (Palmer, 1998, p. 237)

Causal guidance manifestations appear to include shamans’ direct encounters with the Great Spirit, Vajrayana Buddhists’ realization of the inner guru, Jung’s archetype of the Self, and the Diamond teachings’

Diamond Body (Almaas, 2004; Krippner, 1988). Walsh (1990) states, “although shamans traditionally have aimed for the experience of soul travel in the subtle realms, a few of them may also have explored the casual and absolute” (p. 241). Palmer (1998) concurs with the assumption that shamanic traditions participated in the experience of this infinite plane of experience, stating, “In the ancient world, still rooted in nonduality, it was understood that individuals operate within a greater intelligence” (p. 33).

This study is taking a comparative, cross-cultural approach to data-gathering, as I assume there to be an intrinsic value in examining the same phenomenon across multiple traditions, thus providing a multi-faceted analysis of diverse reportage. I am working with a composite definition of psychospiritual guidance culled from the research literature, in the supposition that the diverse traditions explored here are either pointing to different facets of the same aggregate phenomenon or are articulating similar experiences in different ways. In the integrated literature review to follow, brief synopses are given of prominent forms of guidance in each of the four psychospiritual traditions under investigation as derived from extant scholarship on the subject published in English. In the discussion and conclusion sections, these theoretical accounts are compared to the forthcoming interview data to ascertain whether the phenomena detailed in the literature are substantiated by the experiential reportage of contemporary practitioners.

Integral Review of Psychospiritual Guidance Literature

Literature of Ayahuasca Shamanism

The shamans and mystics of primitive societies are considered—and rightly—to be superior beings; their magico-religious powers also find expression in an extension of their mental capacities. The shaman is the man who knows and remembers, that is, who understands the mysteries of life and death. (Eliade, 1964, p. 102)

The tradition broadly cited as “shamanism” represents the most widespread and ancient methodical system of mind-body healing and transformation known to humanity and can be considered to be the source tradition of all mystical and psychospiritual paths (Halifax, 1982; Krippner, 1988; McClenon, 2000; Narby & Huxley, 2001; Walsh, 1989). Walsh (2007) defines shamanism as, “a family of traditions whose practitioners focus on voluntarily entering altered states of consciousness in which they experience themselves or their spirit(s) interacting with other entities, often by traveling to other realms, in order to serve their community” (p. 16). According to Walsh (1989),

At its best, the shamanic tradition transmits a body of information and techniques that allows novices to recreate the altered states, experiences, and abilities of their predecessors...It is this direct personal experience of the sacred that defines the mystic and that properly allows shamanism to be called humankind's first mystical tradition. (p. 2)

Many scholars define shamans as those possessing the ability to commune with and employ the assistance of spirits (Walsh, 2007). Shamans typically function in a community as healers, but they also engage in divination, information retrieval, and spiritual warfare if deemed necessary. The shaman often journeys as a psychopomp, a

spiritual guide of the souls of both living and dead, and must be able to navigate the three realms that make up shamanic reality (Harner, 1980). Entrance to these realms is typically achieved through participation in rituals summoning guidance, generally involving intensive physical and musical rhythmic participation and the ingestion of sacred plants (Furst, 1972), referred to by shamanic researcher Winkelman (2002) as “psychointegrators.”

Three Worlds

The three distinct realms posited by shamanic cosmology, the *upperworld*, *middleworld*, and *lowerworld*, correspond to the spiritual, human, and earthly dimensions of being (Doore, 1988, p. 25). These worlds may be interpreted as both geographical and internal realms of awareness that in transpersonal psychology might correspond to spirit, ego, and soul. The prominent shamanic scholar Mircea Eliade (as cited in Nicholson, 1987) emphasizes the importance of these realms to the shaman:

The pre-eminently shamanic technique is the passage from one cosmic region to another—from earth to the sky or from earth to the underworld. The shaman knows the mystery of the breakthrough in plane. This communication among the cosmic zones is made possible by the very structure of the universe...which can be successfully traversed because they are linked together by a central axis. (p. 17)

For over 40 millennia shamans have tuned into a biologically based “signal system” to navigate these worlds in order to help their communities survive and thrive physically and psychologically, employing independent spirit entities and power animals for insight,

information, and guidance (Kalweit, 1984). Psychospiritual guidance may be interpreted as the dynamic equivalent of this signal system, a “neurognostic guidance structure” in human beings that has been an indispensable aid to psychospiritual development since the dawn of shamanism (Winkelman, 2002). Neurognostic structures are “innate knowledge modules of consciousness, [which] can also be thought of as reflecting what Jung called ‘archetypes’” (p. 27), providing evidence of a potential neural basis to cross-cultural shamanic experience.

A neurognostic perspective explains the worldwide distribution of specific constellations of global shamanic characteristics, reflected in mythic rituals and the very concept of a “spirit world,” the ubiquitous nature of which suggests their biological bases (Winkelman, 2002). A psychological rationale for the shamanic ability to develop “spirit vision” in attuning to the spirit world is the special ability of select individuals to “recognize and interpret the flux of visual images seen during altered states...shamans can create meaningful patterns from unclear data, organizing ambiguous experiences into coherent, meaningful images” (Walsh, 2007, p. 132).

Spirit Allies

Regardless of form, spirit allies appear to help shamans in four main ways: assisting on journeys, providing new powers and abilities, teaching new information and wisdom, and possessing the shaman in a trance-like state of mediumship (Halifax, 1991). According to shamanic scholar Nevill Drury (1989),

In the shaman's world, spirit allies have many functions—they can detect the origins of illness, be dispatched to recover lost souls, be summoned in acts of aggression and show a clear path past obstacles which might arise in the shaman's spiritual quest.... Spirit helpers may appear to shamans in dreams, in visions, and spontaneously after initiations. In some societies shamans also exchange or inherit them. (p. 27)

Developing familiarity with spirit allies takes place in two stages: first the novice shaman needs to see spirits, and then to stabilize this visionary ability (Walsh, 2007, p. 134). Two broad categories of spirit guides or allies—entities that provide guidance and protection in nonordinary states of consciousness—exist in the subtle realm of shamanic experience. The first, known as a shaman's "familiar," are predominantly controlled by and in service of the shaman. These spirit entities reliably guide and protect the shaman and can serve as an avatar or alter ego in their journeys. The second, typically called "guardians" or "helpers," are relatively independent of the shaman, though responsive to his supplication for assistance. These latter guides may appear as deities, ancestor spirits, or power animals (Harner, 1973). Drury (1989) explains,

In all cases...spirit guides are perceived as crucial to the shaman's resolve and power—literal embodiments of his psychic and magical strength...The shaman's unique role, after all, is as an intermediary: he is special because he is effective on more than one plane of reality and it is up to him to maintain that special access by mustering all the assistance he can obtain. (p. 27)

The use of spirit allies appears widespread throughout many cultures. According to sixteenth century physician Paracelsus (as cited in Walsh, 2007), "everyone may educate and regulate his imagination so as to come thereby into contact with spirits, and be taught by them" (p. 133).

Ayahuasca

Because the shamanic landscape is so vast and varied, I am highlighting the use of the Western Amazonian psychoactive sacrament ayahuasca as representative of a shamanic approach to summoning spiritual assistance with the aid of entheogens, psychoactive substances utilized in sacred or therapeutic contexts (Smith, 2000). The shamanic interview subjects selected for this study are individuals whose main practice involves ayahuasca and a related though less well-known plant with similar qualities, *Mimosa hostilis*. (Due to this definitional constraint, while one of the Jungian interviewees makes use of shamanic techniques such as drumming and dancing to activate her guidance, she is thus not identified in this dissertation as a “shamanic” practitioner.)

In Quechua, a native South American language, *ayahuasca* means “vine of the souls” or “spirits of the dead” (Metzner, 1999) and has been used for millennia as a prime means of attaining knowledge of personal and universal import by indigenous cultures throughout the Amazon in Western and northern Brazil, eastern Ecuador, Peru, and Columbia. The number of North American users of ayahuasca has increased from hundreds fewer than 10 years ago to many thousands today (Heuser, 2006). Benny Shanon (2002), a prominent ayahuasca researcher, succinctly describes this entheogen’s effects:

Typically, Ayahuasca induces powerful visions as well as hallucinations in all other perceptual modalities. Pronounced non-perceptual cognitive effects are also manifest. These include personal insights, intellectual ideations, affective reactions, and profound spiritual and mystical experiences. Moreover, Ayahuasca introduces those who partake of it to what are experienced as other realities.

Those who consume the brew may feel that they are gaining access to new sources of knowledge and that the mysteries and ultimate truths of the universe are being revealed to them. All this is coupled with what drinkers describe as an encounter with the Divine. (p. 13)

Drinkers of the ayahuasca brew frequently report communication with autonomous hallucinatory entities who offer them guidance, teaching, healing, insight, and information. According to Shanon (2002),

Ayahuasca is purported to allow the shaman to be in touch with the spirits—the beings of other worlds and the dead. For many, Ayahuasca is not merely a potion or a plant but also a being with special, unique qualities or even a deity. (p. 15)

Ayahuasca is also widely known as a medicine, healer, and spiritual intelligence in and of “Herself.” It is reported that the brew enables the *ayahuascero*, or ayahuasca shaman, both to see inside patients to perceive their ailments and to connect with wise entities that assist in the healing of these maladies (Metzner, 1999). As ayahuasca can be understood to provide guidance on both the subtle and causal planes, this entheogen represents an especially suitable shamanic approach for exploring psychospiritual guidance in the shamanic tradition.

Literature of Vajrayana Buddhism

The concept of “spiritual teacher” or “spiritual guide” has been the leading principle in the religious life of the Tibetans...the specific nature of the “spiritual guide” [is] an inner process of growth with its attendant attitude towards the individual’s environment, rather than as the interaction of two individuals. (Guenther, 1989, pp. 225-229)

For the purposes of this study, I am using the term “Tibetan Buddhism” as synonymous with “Vajrayana” Buddhism—the

“diamantine way” or “indestructible vehicle” of Buddhism that includes tantric practices as an efficient skillful means for attaining the full realization of enlightened mind. The tantric master Padmasambhava brought the dharma from India to Tibet in 774 AD, taming the resident *nagas*, or evil spirits, and subjugating them to serve and protect the Buddhist teachings of the dharma. *Bön*, Tibet’s native shamanic tradition, offers a rich bridge between shamanism and Buddhist tantra, as many of its shamanic practices were purposefully adopted and amalgamated by Buddhism in service of enlightenment for all sentient beings. Vajrayana Buddhism represents the highest tantric practices of Tibetan Buddhism, distinct from though often assumed to be inclusive of the nondual Dzogchen and Mahamudra practices of directly abiding in non-conditioned and spontaneously arising awareness (Ray, 2000, 2002).

Bön

Vajrayana shares many facets of psychospiritual guidance with its shamanic Bön roots, using rituals, dreams, and symbols to access both the subtle and causal realms. According to Bön and Buddhist practitioner Tenzin Wangyal (2002), “this blending of shamanism with the higher views of [Buddhist] sutra, tantra and Dzogchen may be unique to Tibetan culture” (p. 34). The five Buddha families or wisdom energies that comprise reality in the Vajrayana tradition are remarkably similar to the five elements and five spirits of Bön. Indeed, Wangyal notes, “The understanding that the elements are the abode of innumerable living

beings, including divine goddesses and powerful semi-divine beings, is part of the strength of shamanic practices” (p. 29).

Bön and Tibetan Buddhism also both make extensive use of guidance beings, including deities and oracles. In the words of Wangyal (2002),

Working with these beings is a common practice in Tibetan culture and is the domain of what I’m calling shamanism, though I want to be clear that there is no word like “shamanism” in the Tibetan language...Tibetan traditions of working with sprits originated in Bön but are now found throughout Tibetan culture. Many decisions made by Tibetan officials and high lamas of monasteries of sects are made partially through consulting human oracles and non-physical beings. (p. 3)

Three Kayas

In Buddhist cosmology three coexistent *kayas*, or “bodies,” exist, each manifesting a different level of reality formation. According to Buddhist scholar and practitioner Allan Wallace (1993), simply by accepting the different realms of Buddhism on faith, without having experienced their reality for oneself, “we are moving beyond the parallels with psychology that are common in the fundamental teachings of Buddhism” (p. 145). Wallace (1993) emphasizes, “It is important to recognize that the sensual, subtle material and immaterial dimensions are all realms of experience. They are interpenetrating and are not spatially separate...but on different frequencies of being” (p. 65).

The densest or most manifest of these levels is the material or sensual realm, known as the *Nirmanakaya*, where enlightened beings can appear in the flesh to teach the dharma. This realm gives rise to “outer”

guidance in the form of external teachers or events. The middle realm is the *Sambhogakaya*, an energetic dimension that includes both the upper and lower worlds of shamanic tradition and corresponds to both the subtle and causal realms. "It is possible for humans to experience this experiential dimension by refining their awareness through the cultivation of high degrees of mental stability and clarity" (Wallace, 1993, p. 64). The Sambhogakaya realm is referred to in Buddhism as the "illusory" or "enjoyment" body, the plane of consciousness in which an enlightened mind such as a Buddha's appears to non-enlightened minds.

According to Wallace (1993), "By achieving even more refined states of Samadhi [concentration], it is possible to gain access to a yet subtler dimension known as the *immaterial* or *formless realm*" (p. 64). This indivisible, unmanifest source of ultimate being is called the *Dharmakaya*. It is the dynamic ground from which all phenomena are born, analogous to the infinite or absolute level of existence. The nondual, primordial, and pristine condition of consciousness that is the Dharmakaya reveals reality directly in its bare, uncontrived, and unembellished origination. It is in the stark naked awareness of the Dharmakaya that an enlightened mind is perceived by another enlightened mind, as a simultaneous experience of form and emptiness, in which there is no longer dualistic separation of inner and outer dimensions. According to Vajrayana Buddhism, this unconditioned and unadorned awareness is nothing other than one's true nature; "One of the most common analogies used to describe Buddha nature is space itself" (Wallace, 1993, p. 148).

Deities and Dakinis

Deity yoga, meaning “union with the deity,” entails merging with and embodying for oneself the realization of the wisdom qualities of various peaceful and wrathful awakened beings or energies that one wishes increasingly to emulate or with which one already experiences a natural affinity. These “Deities...may each be regarded as an archetype embodying a different facet of enlightened awareness. These are not truly existent, separate entities existing in some divine place” (Wallace, 1993, p. 190). They are, rather, inherent patterns of consciousness within the human mind that have only to be recognized and sustained in awareness for their blessings to be activated. According to Jungian and Tibetan Buddhist scholar Radmila Moacanin (1986),

The different types of deities visualized in personified form are expressed outwardly in Tibetan iconography, while inwardly they correspond to different psychological states. By identifying with the various deities of the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon the profane consciousness is transcended into the knowledge of the holy, and thus images become symbols of transformation. The anthropomorphic Tantric images are regarded as archetypes, yet become real to the meditator. According to Jung, archetypes *come to life* when they are meaningful to an individual. Like all powerful symbols, Tantric images when infused with emotion, gain numinosity and supply meditators with energy that carry them a step forward into another psychological realm—the transpersonal, spiritual. (p. 59)

Dakinis are in turn subtle energetic manifestations in female form, interpreted as “genii of meditation and spiritual helpers” (Moacanin, 1986, p. 62) that serve to awaken dormant capacities of the psyche. The dakini can be conceptualized as the feminine principle in Tibetan Buddhism, and “symbolizes the principle of motion and reflects the dynamic forces that

are the same in the cosmos as in the psyche of the individual” (Moacanin, 1986, p. 62). According to Vajrayana scholar-practitioner Judith Simmer-Brown (2002),

Dakini visions have the power to arouse the Tantric practitioner in all areas of spiritual practice, for she represents his or her own wisdom-mind, the nature of which is inexpressible...Missing an opportunity to receive teachings from a realized dakini can lead to years of fruitless practice, frustrating obstacles, and general lack of synchronicity with the teacher and his or her transmissions. For this reason there are many guidelines, recorded and oral, for how to recognize dakinis. (pp. 26-54)

The dakini also has much in common with Jung’s conception of the anima, the feminine aspect of the psyche, which is discussed in the review of Jungian literature below.

Like the anima, the dakini manifests in a manner that is immanently personal while representing a perspective on reality that is vaster and profound. She appears in dreams, meditation, or visions, taking a variety of forms, both wrathful and peaceful. She is frightening, for she represents a realm beyond personal control, and she wields enormous power...If she is recognized, she can transform the individual in ways that lead to greater awakening; thus she is said to hold the keys to transformation. (Simmer-Brown, 2002, p. 14)

As with the anima, deities and dakinis appear to manifest in the subtle realm. If related to skillfully, however, they have the power to grant the mind access to both causal and absolute experience.

Inner and Outer Guru

The inner guru is the internalization of the outer guru that bridges a practitioner’s dualistic consciousness with the innate and nonconceptual

mind that is enlightenment. In the words of Herbert Guenther (Guenther & Trungpa, 2001), a seasoned Vajrayana practitioner and scholar,

This deep inner experience is the guru operating, and through such profound experiences he has this tremendous influence on the pattern of our spiritual growth. For in the ultimate sense, the guru is none other than the Buddha—not the historical Buddha but Buddhahood itself...In guru yoga the practitioner strives to awaken his or her basic nature by merging with the guru...The presence of their example challenges us to look into our selves and awaken to our own being...When one's vision begins to mature one perceives the guru as the great challenger in the quest to be true to oneself. (p. 60)

The inner guru experience resides on the causal or cosmic plane, in which an experiential merging with an internalized representation of one's own "Buddha nature" serves to awaken one's own dormant capacities and compass for awakening. According to Tulku Thondup Rinpoche (1997), while the Dharma is ultimately unchanging in its "suchness," it manifests in different forms for various beings according to their individual karma. According to Guenther (1989),

Appearance as spiritual guide means that the five elements (which build the universe and what lives in it) do not use words and letters to point out the spiritual guide...but that they point by themselves through their very being so that without resorting to the fictional division into self and other (-than-self), appearance displays reality by its very being. (pp. 229-230)

Tibetan Buddhist practitioner Rigdzin Dorje (2001) elucidates the critical role of the spiritual teacher in this nondual realization:

The primary goal of Tantric practice is to experience the relationship between form and emptiness as nonduality. This is called . . . "the one taste." The vajra master embodies that realization in person...It is called transmission: realization as an outlook shared by individuals. If one could experience the mind of the lama oneself, enter into that unconditioned condition, then that would constitute as one's

experience of the realized state. This “unifying with the mind of the lama” is the fruit of the practice of Vajrayana...The method of the root teacher or vajra master is traditionally compared to a mirror...The mirror of the lama affects both the quality of our enlightenment and the style of our unenlightenment, such that we are able to recognize them both...This coming to recognition is understood to be both a long and gradual process. But it could also be completely accomplished in a moment, or in many moments from time to time, like a stroboscope that accelerates frequency. (pp. 14-16)

Moacanin (1986) further elucidates on the indispensable role of the outer guru in Vajrayana practice in assisting the spiritual aspirant to awaken to the experience of the inner guru:

the need for a human guru, or spiritual teacher, is of tremendous importance. Only with the help and guidance of another human being can one’s consciousness be awakened and real progress made...Gurus cannot transfer their wisdom to the disciples, but their words, which resonate beyond the meaning of the ordinary words, can touch and move the disciples when they are ready for the teaching. When that happens it is as if a key has opened the door of perception in the innermost being of the disciples, and gradually their horizons are widened...The human guru, being the model of a complete person, is but the archetypal symbol of the Supreme Guru, or the principle of Buddhahood, and so the process goes on in the minds of the disciples till the image of the guru has been integrated within themselves. The disciple realizes that the teacher is not outside but inside his psyche, and is none other than his own Self... (p. 56)

Literature of Jungian Psychology

Philemon and other figures of my fantasies brought home to me the crucial insight that there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life. Philemon represented a force which was not myself. In my fantasies I held conversations with him, and he said things which I had not consciously thought. For I observed clearly that it was he who spoke, not I. He said I treated thoughts as if I generated them myself, but in his

view thoughts were like animals in the forest...It was he who taught me psychic objectivity, the reality of the psyche...Philemon represented superior insight...To me he was what the Indians call a guru. (Jung, 1965, p. 183)

The psychospiritual framework of this study shares much in common with the transpersonal paradigm offered by Jungian psychology, thus warranting here in the literature review a more in depth exposition of Jungian psychology than is afforded the other three traditions. Jung's transpersonal worldview posits the reality of nonordinary and collective states of consciousness and advocates for cultivating inner guides for assistance in navigating diverse realms in service of wisdom and healing (Jung, 1964). Indeed, Jung's expressed guiding motivation throughout much of his mature life was to defend the spiritual contributions of religion alongside the empirical discoveries of science. Jung (1973) states,

it is exceedingly difficult nowadays to inculcate into people any conception of genuine religiosity. I have found that religious terminology only scares them off still more, for which reason I always have to tread the path of science and experience, quite irrespective of any tradition, in order to get my patients to acknowledge spiritual truths. (p. 118)

Jung discovered in the shamanic tradition a fertile source of support for his own process of scientific and spiritual inquiry. "Jung considered shamanism to be among 'the great religions,' and he saw shamanic experience as exemplifying the individuation process on an archaic level" (TePaske as cited in Sandner & Wong, 1997, p. 20).

Psychospiritual guidance in particular has shown itself to be an important concept in Jungian literature in regard to *individuation*, Jung's championed goal for psychological well-being. According to shamanic scholar John Dourley (as cited in Pentikäinen, 1996),

Jung's appropriation of shamanism illustrates how he understands it as shedding light on the process of individuation, which is understood as an ongoing and cyclical entrance into the world of the unconscious and return from it enhanced by an unmediated encounter with the Spirits. (p. 54)

It is interesting, however, that nowhere in Jung's writings do we see mention of an archetype of guidance itself; though Jung continually articulates facets of this theme, he never seems to speak to it directly. Jung was well aware, however, of his debt to the shamanic tradition for his practices of active imagination and dream work. He writes,

The [shaman's] ecstasy is often accompanied by a state in which the shaman is 'possessed' by his familiars or guardian spirits. By means of this possession he acquires the mystical organs which in some sort constitute his true and complete spiritual personality. This confirms the psychological inference that may be drawn from shamanic symbolism, namely, that it is a projection of the individuation process. (Jung, 1967, p. 341)

Jung realized that despite their many apparent differences, both shamanism and analytic psychology focus on the health and wholeness of the psyche. In the words of Jungian analyst Donald Sandner (as cited in Sandner & Wong, 1997), Jung recognized that,

the basic shamanic pattern is not a manifestation of a particular culture but rather is, as Jung pointed out, an archetype—a constant and universal part of the human psyche, manifested more in some persons or places than others but always there and ready for use. Jung saw this pattern as a projection of individuation (the inner psychic process of development) and shamanism as part of the heritage of analytical psychology. (p. 4)

According to Shanon (2002), Jungian psychology holds much in common with ayahuasca shamanism in particular; "Of all theoretical frameworks in psychology the Jungian one seems to be especially fitting

for the analysis of the ayahuasca experience. There is, indeed, much in common between ayahuasca visions and the visions investigated by Jung” (p. 369).

Jung would likely understand the messenger beings perceived by ayahuasca practitioners as heralding from the imaginal realm of the collective unconscious, akin to his understanding of the source of the deities of Tibetan Buddhism (Jung, 1978). Indeed, Jung’s personal experience of several daemon figures is not dissimilar to the revelation of visionary beings and realms to Tibetan tantric masters in Vajrayana practice (Gyatso, 1999). As is evident from the above discussion of the Buddhist dakinis, Jung’s theory and experience of the anima similarly share much in common with the dynamic manifestation of these energetic messengers.

Active Imagination and Daemons

Following upon his painful and historic break-up with Freud, Jung underwent an intensive self-analysis, discovering in his exploration of his unconscious experience a realm of inner vision rich in symbolic and imaginative detail. In his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1965), Jung describes the apotheosis of this simultaneously disorienting and illuminating process:

I did my best not to lose my head but to find some way to understand these strange things, I stood helpless before an alien world . . . Then I let myself drop. Suddenly it was as though the ground literally gave way beneath my feet, and I plunged down into the dark depths. (pp. 178-179)

Jung (1965) claims to have generated many of his original theories of the psyche during this prolonged period while observing both his own and his clients' dreams and imaginal realm explorations: "All my works, all my creative activity, has come from those initial fantasies and dreams" (p. 217). Jung also credits much his ongoing inspiration from his dialogues with Philemon, his most influential daemon, or inner guide. Jung found that he was able to most effectively access the imaginal realm and communicate with Philemon through his exploratory work with dreams and symbols, as well as with his pioneering method of active imagination. In the words of Moacanin (1986),

Jung views the process of active imagination as equivalent to the alchemical operation. In essence it involves an ongoing dialogue between two opposites, that is, consciousness and the unconscious, in the course of which all aspects of one's being are gradually integrated. It is the work of reconciliation and union of opposites leading to psychological transformation. (44)

Active imagination has been referred to as "a dialogue with the gods" (Palmer, 1998, p. 103) and makes use of Jung's concept of *amplification*, a way of deciphering imaginal content by recognizing its correspondence to mythology, art, and culture (Edinger, 1972). According to Jungian analyst Barbara Hannah (1953),

Whenever man has tried to come to terms with an invisible, supernatural and apparently eternal reality...he has instinctively evolved...some form of meditation or dialogue that corresponds in a greater or lesser degree with what Jung has called the active imagination. (p. 38)

Raff (2000) describes in rich detail the active imagination process:

the ideal form of active imagination is a dialogue or interchange between an inner figure and the ego. The inner figure actually personifies the content of the unconscious we

are attempting to engage, and it does so in a form that can speak and actively exchange information with the ego...An inner figure is a personification of a particular content of the conscious, so that dealing with that figure is also dealing with the content in question...[it is] the best method for directly engaging the transcendent function [of the psyche]...Beginning as a technique, active imagination becomes a state of being...the world is alive and vital, filled with magical possibilities and a numinous background that takes very little to activate. (p. 25)

Daemon, meanwhile, is the term Jung uses to connote a personification of the archetype of the guardian spirit or individuated Self often associated with the communication of advice and inspiration. Jung tells of four distinct personal relationships he cultivated with daemonic entities: Salome, Elijah, Philemon, and Ka. Philemon, a pagan inner guru figure who emerged out of Elijah and later evolved into Ka, contributed most to Jung's psychospiritual development.

The daemon has a long history in Western civilization. In Plato's *Apologia*, Socrates speaks of his *daimonion*, or "divine voice," which had granted him explicit guidance from a young age: "This sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me when I was a child" (Colaiaco, 2001, p. 157). In the modern age, the existential psychologist Rollo May (1969) declares, "The daemonic is obviously not an entity but refers to a fundamental, archetypal function of human experience" (p. 123). It has been Jung, however, who has done the most to bring the concept of the daemon to the awareness of contemporary Westerners:

What is it...that induces a man to go his own way and to rise out of unconscious identity?...It is what is commonly called vocation: an irrational factor that destines a man to emancipate himself...true personality is always a vocation. But a vocation acts like a law of God from which there is no escape...He must obey his own law, as if it were a daemon,

whispering to him of new and wonderful paths. Anyone with a vocation hears the voice of the inner man: he is called. That is why the legends say that he possesses a private daemon who counsels him and whose mandates he must obey...The original meaning of "to have a vocation" is to be addressed by a voice. (Jung, 1964, pp. 175-176)

Synchronicity and Dreams

Jung (1952) introduced the word "synchronicity" to describe a connection between two events that is forged by meaning as opposed to cause and effect. He proposed synchronicity as a natural law that works alongside chance and causality to connect disparate events. Jung defines it variously as a "meaningful coincidence," an "acausal parallelism," or "an acausal connecting principle" (Main, 2000, p. 89). In greater length, he describes synchronicity as "the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state" (p. 89). In short, synchronicity bridges the subjective and objective domains, revealing a glimpse into an interconnectedness of being previously unseen (Wilhelm & Baynes, 1967).

The same metaphoric signs and symbols that inform the occurrence of synchronicities and the active imagination process also participate in dreams (Raff, 2000). According to Palmer (1998), "Dreams exemplify the potent vocabulary of metaphor, which is the language of inner knowing. Rather than being fictitious fantasies, dreams produce powerful information that can be verified when we wake and analyze the communication" (p. 79).

Archetypes, Psychoid Realm, and Symbols

Jung sought to explain synchronistic events by means of his concept of archetypes. He described archetypes as “formal factors responsible for the organization of unconscious psychic processes: they are ‘patterns of behavior’” (Main, 2000, p. 89). Archetypes are fields of meaning in the unconscious that may be recognized simultaneously as a psychic event and a physical reality. Smith (1976) states, “archetypes may be likened to invisible magnetic fields which iron fillings visibly conform to. Archetypes prescribe the kind of experience we shall have, but what we experience is individual” (p. 40).

Jung (1964) understood the archetypes and human instinctual drives, respectively, to constitute the higher and lower spectra of the psyche. Beyond either of these polarities of mind, awareness either dissolves into absolute spirit or congeals into absolute matter, both states of which are inaccessible to conscious perception. Jung thus saw the archetypes as embodying the most subtle expressions of psychospiritual awareness, evidenced in parapsychological capacities, while he viewed the instincts as manifestations of the most gross somatic frequency of mind, experienced as psychosomatic symptoms (1969). Depending upon the individual psyche’s ability to integrate these extreme experiences, such encounters may range from inspirational and organizing, experienced as sacred or divine communion, to invasive and disorganizing, resulting in disorientation and psychosis (Heuser, 2006; Ulanov, 2005).

Between these absolute limits of conscious awareness Jung (1993) posited the *psychoid realm*, the spectrum of mind in which autonomous

and archetypal encounters occur. According to Raff, “When body becomes spirit and spirit becomes body, we enter a new realm of experience that I call the psychoid...it is noteworthy that the Sufis developed this notion centuries ago” (Raff, 2000, p. xvii). Jungian scholar Erich Neumann (1993) sheds light on the nature of the psychoid realm in his description of archetypes as “pictorial forms of the instincts, for the unconscious reveals itself to the conscious mind in images which, as in dreams and fantasies, initiate the process of conscious reaction and assimilation” (p. xv). The psychoid realm in which these archetypes take pictorial form may be seen to be analogous to the Sambhogakaya realm of Vajrayana Buddhism.

Archetypes often express themselves in the form of symbols as well as pictorial images (Main, 2000). Jung (1959) believed the archetypes themselves to have transpersonal and a priori ontological status, generating the symbolic forms that underlie human mythology and meaning making. According to cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien (1997), in her extensive work with the Tarot, which she defines as “a symbolic map of consciousness,”

I found that Jung was correct: symbols *are* the “psychological mechanism for transforming energy” and additionally, they function as audio-visual suggestology tools which set up a matrix for self-fulfilling prophecy, thereby enhancing an individual’s trust in his or her own intuition and inner guidance. (pp. 12-13)

Jung sought to integrate the unconscious and conscious realms of the mind through the interpretation of archetypal symbols, positing that symbols manifest in one’s life when one needs to experience meaning beyond concepts (Storr, 1973, p. 249). He recommended the efficacy of

both dream analysis and spontaneous artistic expression towards this end (Jung, 1993). Jung (1967) meanwhile described the archetypal energies that birth such symbols as “sovereign, omniscient, and unchanging,” and went on to say,

Our personal psychology is just a thin skin, a ripple on the ocean of collective psychology...The archetypes are the great decisive forces, they bring about the real events, and not our personal reasoning and practical intellect...The archetypal images decide the fate of man. (p. 183)

Moacanin (1986) elaborates on Jung’s conviction that archetypal energies, expressed through images and symbols, are indeed the birthright of all human beings across history and culture, while emphasizing their pronounced manifestation in Tibetan Buddhism:

The sacred images—whether those of the Tibetan pantheon, or the modern world, or of any mythology of any time and place—are the common heritage of humanity and are present in every individual. And Jung found out in his therapeutic practice that contemporary men and women in the western world spontaneously produced, from their unconscious, images that were part of mythologies of remote places and ancient times, and that these images could have a profound and powerful effect on the individual. In the act of vision, of contact with the symbol, they could be renewed and their psychic energy transformed, a fact Tibetan Buddhists have known for centuries. (p. 65)

Ego-Self Axis and Anima/Animus

Jung perceived the ego to be the seat of the conscious and subjective identity and personality. He meanwhile conceptualized the Self as the centrality of the total psyche, an ultimate position of objectivity that includes both conscious and unconscious awareness (Jung, 1964). Jung postulated that the Self is the source of creation, which one might call

God. Jung (1972) also held that the Self is experienced in patterned and recognizable ways, be it expressed as symbolic circles called mandalas, a felt sense of numinosity and wholeness, or an embodied understanding of the union of opposing energies that constitute the dualistic psyche.

As both the Self and the ego are autonomous hubs of psychic life, the median between these two centers, which Jung called the *ego-Self axis* (Edinger, 1972), emerges as a metaphoric boundary between the two polarities of awareness. Eventually, Jung (1976) proposed, the process of *individuation*, the psyche's innate drive towards wholeness, involves engaging in a conscious dialectic between the ego and the Self. Such an integral and dynamic awareness supports one's ultimate liberation from personal and collective conditioning. As with the guru, also known as the 'spiritual friend,' in Tibetan Buddhism, the Jungian analyst plays a critical role in assisting in the individuation process. According to Moacanin (1986),

The analyst plays essentially the same role as the spiritual friend; yet there is an important distinction...Jung postulates that in the course of psychological treatment the therapist must be equally affected by the therapeutic encounter...The guru, by contrast, one is told, having attained high spiritual realization is immune to such contamination and cannot be affected by the students' negativities. (p. 58)

With the supportive assistance of a Jungian analyst, individuation gradually takes place through a dynamic of *compensation*, whereby imbalances in a person's conscious awareness are addressed by compensatory unconscious dynamics that if successfully integrated contribute to a state of greater psychic wholeness (Jung, 1976). As the Self is the archetype of the central unity of the psyche, the *anima* is the

archetype of the feminine in man, as is the *animus* that of the masculine in women. Each respective archetypal influence serves as a catalyst in the process of psychic integration (Moacanin, 1986). Both the daemon and anima/animus are archetypal processes related to psychospiritual guidance, serving as guides into the collective unconscious in order to bring greater contents of the Self experience to the awareness of the ego. According to Sandner (as cited in Sandner & Wong, 1997), "In analytical psychology the anima/animus represent the gateway to the deeper psyche, to wholeness" (p. 8).

Literature of the Diamond Approach/Diamond Logos

Spiritual guidance is not the same thing as when people talk about guides who tell you what to do...It's connected classically or traditionally with the angel of revelation, so it's connected with revealing truth. Guidance doesn't tell me what to do. It mostly indicates that I'm on the right track. It works by revealing the truth of the moment in a way that takes the consciousness deeper or closer to the Spiritual Ground. (Almaas as cited in Borysenko & Dveirin, p. 203)

The Diamond Approach and Diamond Logos teachings derive from an "inner work school" developed chiefly by A. H. Almaas and Faisal Muqaddam that utilize the processes of surrender and open-ended inquiry into personal experience to assist the soul's "unfoldment" (Davis, 1999). The Diamond teachings draw chiefly upon Sufism, Vajrayana Buddhism, psychological object relations theory, and somatic sensing in their aim to lift unconscious barriers blocking a potential ever-present state of "self-realization" (Almaas, 2004; Cortright, 1997). In Cortright's (1997) view, these teachings represent "perhaps the fastest growing

transpersonal approach on the scene today” (p. 90). According to Almaas (2004), “The Diamond Approach is a path of wisdom, an approach to the investigation of Reality and work on oneself that leads to human maturity and liberation” (p. 588, n. 2). Muqaddam (Palden Drolma, 2008) further elucidates the nature of this path or process:

The Diamond Logos is a specific process of reclaiming one’s ‘true self’, our ‘Being.’ Through this teaching we learn to recognize and embody our precious nature and its many manifestations as we consciously cultivate the skills needed to differentiate between our false personality (ego-identity) and essential nature (true self). (§ 13)

The Diamond teachings are perhaps unique in their equal indebtedness to Eastern spirituality and Western psychology in their theoretical development. Their emphasis upon interpersonal inquiry in both theory and practice takes into the account the predominantly social nature of the many anxieties and pressures many contemporary Westerners feel on a daily basis. In essence the Diamond teachings resemble more an attitude than a codification of spiritual practices, inviting a curious and trusting stance towards individual and relational experience (Almaas, 1986). This open and inquisitive stance can meanwhile help one to feel more confident and engaged in other psychospiritual traditions by offering a means to test one’s unique wisdom against the word of others, empowering one to see traditional frameworks of practice through the lens of one’s own experience.

Essential Realms and States

The intermediate realm can be seen to house *essential states*, an array of domains that include the subtle levels of experience. These states of being manifest as the embodiments of beneficial psychospiritual qualities such as compassion, power, and clarity. While these states are not ultimate, they are dimensions of experience that people inhabit to communicate and teach each other about reality (Almaas, 1998).

According to Muqaddam (cited in Marlow, 2000),

there are three domains. The most mentioned ones are the worldly domain (where the personality and the ego exist) and the enlightened domain (which is referred to as the absolute)...there is an essential self in the middle of that, the individuated soul that can be in the world and in the essence and in the absolute, it has the freedom to be in any of them. That to me is the pinnacle of this journey...The Dalai Lama has said that enlightenment is a very individuated process. When Karmapa becomes enlightened he becomes more Karmapa, he doesn't become just absolute. This is different than the idea of the drop of water dissolving back into the ocean. The boundaries dissolve, we realize that we are pure awareness, but we also continue to exist as unique entities that can evolve as unique souls and can become more and more enlightened...We have realized that the obvious part of us is connected to the hidden part, they are all inter-related...When we fragment it, we suffer. When we stick to the obvious and forget the hidden, we suffer. When we go mystical, spiritual and don't participate in life, we suffer. That for me is the glory of what the human being is. We are the ones that connect this totality together...I want also to support every soul to find its own uniqueness in existence. Its own place, its own bliss, its own gifts that it came to share. (p. 1)

When one fully lets go and opens to difficulty and the truth of a particular experience through the practice of inquiry, there is a natural movement into essential experience (Almaas, 1986). The Diamond teachings explore this intermediate realm of essential states, guiding

attention to wherever one is overly conditioned with a stance of curiosity, openness, and acceptance. According to Almaas (2004),

The Diamond Approach is characterized by a distinctive realization about our essential nature: Essence manifests in various forms as an intelligent response to the changing conditions of the human soul. These forms, which we call the aspects or qualities of Essence, include the perennial flavors of human experience such as Love, Peace, Joy, Truth, Clarity, Compassion, and Value. Each essential aspect has a distinct experiential reality and function, which all share the basic ground of Essence: presence, self-aware luminosity and oneness. (p. 9)

Indeed, the goals of the Diamond teachings bear an uncanny resemblance to those of shamanic disciplines, as reported by Walsh (1990):

Whatever the method, the aim is always the same: to train and cultivate the mind so as to reduce compulsions such as greed, hatred and fear; to strengthen capacities such as will, concentration and wisdom; and to cultivate emotions such as love, compassion, and joy. (p. 30)

Diamond Guidance, Diamond Body, and Dynamism of Being

The Diamond teachings assist practitioners in activating the recognition of their *Diamond Guidance*, an energetic presence that orients guidance seekers towards the essential realms. Almaas (2002) explains,

As the dynamism takes the soul into new realms, our Being reveals many pure qualities, which I have called essential aspects...So how do we discern what these essential qualities are?...For this we need a vehicle of understanding—a source of discrimination and knowledge—that originates from the same or a deeper dimension than the one these qualities come from. This specific guidance that makes this possible is what I call the Diamond Guidance. (pp. 211-212)

One aspect of the Diamond Guidance is knowledge and understanding; another may arise as the transmission of a felt presence of

grace from another person or from the *Diamond Body* itself, the subtle form aspect of the Diamond Guidance. In addition to these ‘diamantine’ manifestations, psychospiritual guidance also plays a large role in the Diamond teachings in the form of an “optimizing force” that encourages the discovery of one’s authentic identity. Almaas (as cited in Borysenko & Dveirin, 2007) states,

In the Diamond Approach, we talk about the optimizing force in the sense that guidance basically opens up and supports the optimizing of our experience, our development—which means, really, the greater actualization of our potential...Guidance basically assists the process [of optimization]—assists us individually to participate in the process, to harmonize with it. But it doesn’t have a particular form it’s moving toward. It keeps developing one form or another depending on the moment, where its intelligence wants to go... It is inherently open. The potential is infinite. The guidance is really like the discerning eye of this dynamic, evolutionary intelligence. (p. 172)

As with Tibetan Buddhism’s concept of the inner guru, Almaas speaks of Diamond Guidance as a revelatory process that cuts through superficiality as clearly as a diamond, spontaneously communicating guidance in whatever form is uniquely appropriate or recognized as such for the situation at hand. As with Vajrayana Buddhism, the Diamond practitioner comes to realize all experience as a manifestation of guidance; “essential guidance can operate with all the dimensions of true nature, because it is the expression of true nature” (Almaas, 2004, p. 347). Almaas speaks of guidance as if it is both a noun and a verb, as indistinguishable as light and lighting in the illumination of one’s experience. He writes (as cited in Borysenko & Dveirin, 2007),

It’s a particular form in which the spiritual nature, whose function is revelation and guidance, manifests

itself... There's no subject/object in the experience of it. The presence is awareness itself, knowing itself by being itself. That's general about spiritual presence—the guidance is a particular way of having that immediacy and has its own flavor. (p. 19)

The Diamond Body arises from the absolute and dissolves back into it, activating dormant, latent, or atrophied capacities in an individual upon contact, while simultaneously guiding one to issues that need to be faced, worked with, or healed. The Diamond Body can also help one to understand all of the relative components of a situation in order to assemble them more harmoniously in our total experience, ultimately revealing one's innate capacity for omniscience (Almaas, 2004).

The foundational components of the Diamond Approach and Diamond Logos teachings are the same, and their general similarities vastly overshadow their differences. One difference, however, that emerged as significant in determining which participants to include for this study, is that Almaas' Diamond Approach school "downplays the importance of images...by neglecting the power that images and symbols may have for inner deepening and therapy, it leaves an important door of inward experiences shut" (Cortright, 1997, p. 94). According to Cortright (1997), Almaas "focuses on the body, whereas Jung does not; [though he] gives little importance to images whereas Jung values images highly" (p. 91). Muqaddam, on the other hand, prizes inner seeing and perceives a generous invitation in the intermediary realms of vision to a storehouse of information and instruction. Muqaddam's Diamond Logos teachings are thus of greater relevance to the other three traditions presented here than

Almaas' Diamond Approach, which ultimately influenced my decision to interview practitioners from this branch of the Diamond teachings.

The literature review attests to the pervasiveness of psychospiritual guidance across time and cultures and suggests ways in which several wisdom traditions understand and teach it. Having reviewed several facets of guidance through these brief historical reviews, I will now articulate the research question of this inquiry. I will then describe the methods used to examine the experience of psychospiritual guidance in the lives of 8 diverse contemporary individuals with significant exposure to both ancient and modern guidance-related practices.

Research Question

This study's main research question is, "What are the predominant thematic patterns of experience related to guidance in psychospiritual development as revealed by practitioners of ayahuasca shamanism, Tibetan Buddhism, Jungian psychology, and the Diamond Logos teachings?"

CHAPTER III

METHODS

“In the field of experimentation, chance favors only the prepared mind” (Louis Pasteur as cited in Dubos, 1950, p. 101).

Overview of Research Design

I selected the qualitative research methodology of thematic analysis to interpret my data, as my purpose is to recognize patterns in order to elucidate an initial experiential understanding of psychospiritual guidance (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Because this approach—like all others—is inevitably value-laden and biased, I determined that bringing a phenomenological emphasis to semi-structured interviews across several traditions would be the most effective data-gathering method (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I interviewed 8 practitioners of four psychospiritual traditions using open-ended questions designed to evoke details of their lived experiences of guidance in the psychological and spiritual realms. I analyzed the participant narratives with the assistance of the QSR Nvivo 7 software program using a variant of Boyatzis’ (1998) qualitative thematic analysis procedure for deriving patterns in the transcripts. I then refined these themes to a 95% inter-rater reliability with the aid of one co-researcher who served as an inter-rater.

Procedure

All theoretical models are inherently biased in that they are based upon foundational assumptions. However, the tradition of comparative

scholarship can help differentiate essential and universal aspects of development from culturally specific forms of expression (Smith, 1991). To reduce vulnerability to prejudice or parochialism, I have investigated psychospiritual guidance as interpreted by several different, though related, wisdom traditions. Acknowledging the value of collective and shared knowledge as a critical adjunct to direct experience, I assume that collecting interview data from diverse individuals who have experience with a phenomenon is beneficial in studying that phenomenon. Multiple narratives reveal common aspects of phenomena invisible to the individual and identifiable only in groups, in much the same way that “tree-ness” is much easier to grasp after seeing a variety of trees than it is after seeing just one tree.

The key strength of the extant scholarship surrounding psychospiritual guidance lies in the wide variety of psychospiritual domains and traditions it has to draw upon; the primary weakness is the near lack of systematic research that examines experiential data. To date there has been very little empirical research in this domain that bridges study and practice, or theoretical and applied qualitative investigation, in Western psychological language. Because psychospiritual guidance has not been substantially investigated in the psychological research literature, no codes have yet been developed to describe this phenomenon in rich detail. In coding the interview transcripts in the present study, I utilized a variant of Boyatzis' (1998) qualitative thematic analysis method, organizing and refining themes that appeared to represent most concisely the narrative data. According to Boyatzis (1998),

Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires an explicit “code.” This may be a list of themes; a complex model with themes, indicators, and qualifications that are causally related; or something between these two forms. A theme is a pattern found in the information that at a minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at a maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon. A theme may be identified at the manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at the latent level (underlying the phenomenon). (p. 4)

My aim in this study is not to establish norms relative to psychospiritual guidance or to develop a definitive developmental codebook from the thematic analysis, but rather simply to recognize and organize emergent themes generated from the interview data. My specific method of coding takes this into account and is based upon Boyatzis’ option of data-driven code development, instead of either theory-driven or prior-research-driven code development (the latter approaches being more suitable for analyzing phenomena that have already been investigated with qualitative analysis methods) (Boyatzis, 1998).

This study design is thus well-suited to address the paucity of qualitative data available in this research domain. Boyatzis (1998) writes,

Data-driven codes are constructed inductively from the raw information. They appear with the words and syntax of the raw information. It is the task of the researcher to interpret the meaning after obtaining the findings and to construct a theory after the discovery of results...Researchers may find thematic analysis to be of most use in the early stages of the research inquiry process, such as the pilot stage...thematic analysis enables the researcher to access a wide variety of phenomenological information as an inductive beginning of the inquiry. (p. 30)

This study follows the general protocol outlined by Boyatzis (1998), which consists of three stages: (a) address design and sampling concerns;

(b) develop themes and a corresponding code; and (c) determine the code's validity, reliability, and functionality. My articulation of methods and results evolved simultaneously over the course of many conversations with my dissertation chair and inter-rater.

Materials

Screening Questionnaire

The first part of my recruitment strategy involved sending an initial inquiry letter to potential participants that included a screening questionnaire, which asked practitioners from each of the four psychospiritual traditions to write in 250 words or less about their experiences with psychospiritual guidance. I intended to base my decision about which 8 individuals would qualify for the final interview pool upon these concise responses. The questionnaire, found in Appendix E, asks the potential participant to share a detail-rich memory of an experience of some form of inner guidance that struck them as true and reliable and that had a profound impact upon them. Although this is a subjective procedure, I presumed that reading a number of different responses would reveal some degree of objectivity or sense of truth among the narratives.

Inclusionary criteria included ascertaining if the individual had had and could articulate a reliable experience of inner guidance. The screening questionnaire was also designed to exclude participants who were inflexible in their beliefs, tending towards a fundamentalist or dogmatic

bias, and those with an interest in end-states over open-ended processes. I similarly intended to exclude those whose responses indicated an inability to step outside of their own perspective in order to reflect upon their experience. An example would be someone who believed that any form of dialogue or discourse kept one mired in dualistic delusion; this perspective would clearly render any approach to nondual awakening through dialectical means meaningless from the outset.

Grice's Maxims

I had planned to utilize Herbert Paul Grice's four maxims of discourse to operationally define the authenticity of the screening questionnaire responses. I did not, however, ultimately need to do so since I eventually decided not to incorporate the screening questionnaire procedure in this study. Grice's maxims include, "(1) Quality—be truthful, and, have evidence for what you say; (2) Quantity—be succinct, yet complete; (3) Relation—be relevant or perspicacious; and (4) Manner—be clear and orderly" (cited in Siegel, 1999, p. 80). These maxims served as a foundational element in Mary Maine's eminent Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), which "requires that the subject perform the dual tasks of collaborative communication and searching for memories" (p. 80).

The assessment of each questionnaire using Grice's maxims would have sought to ascertain if the respondent was being truthful in their detailed autobiographical reflection. In essence, my plan was to use these maxims to discern a coherent state of mind in my interviewees and thus as an operational device defining truthfulness and authenticity (p. 80).

According to psychiatrist and neurobiologist Daniel Siegel (1999), “Coherent narratives...require participation of both the interpreting left-hemisphere and the mentalizing right hemisphere...Coherent narratives are created through hemispheric integration” (p. 31). For a screening questionnaire respondent to have been selected for a final interview, both the dissertation author and chair would have had to concur on the authenticity of the transcript insofar as it adhered to these four maxims.

In actual practice, however, the screening questionnaire turned out to be an unnecessary procedural step. Both my chair and I deemed that all the participants located by word-of-mouth met the study’s qualifying criteria by virtue of their extensive experience in their psychospiritual traditions and their solid reputations in their respective fields of practice. It was more difficult to find women participants than men as available spokespeople for this phenomenon due to the fact that both my dissertation chair and I personally knew more males than females in these traditions to draw upon. It may be, however, that males are also overrepresented in these four fields of inquiry and practice.

Authentication, while always a highly subjective procedure, is especially so in a pioneer study such as this, in which the precise nature of the research is to investigate a new phenomenon so as to help develop clearer guidelines for recognizing it in the future. Although I did not formally code the interview transcripts using Grice’s maxims, a quick review of the texts reveals that for the most part the four maxims are met in each. In lieu of the screening interview protocol, a future researcher could theoretically ascertain if each of the participant responses

specifically meets Grice's criteria by using the maxims as a verification tool to retroactively endorse the interview data.

Participant Selection

The specific selection criteria required that the participants must: (a) have gone through the experience first-hand of learning to reliably and consistently discern, recognize, and authenticate psychospiritual guidance; (b) be able to adequately communicate their responses to these questions in psychological language; (c) be consciously pursuing a path of psychological and spiritual development and identify as a practitioner within one or more of the wisdom traditions of ayahuasca shamanism, Tibetan Buddhism, Jungian psychology, and/or the Diamond teachings; and (d) have non-dogmatic views, thus ruling out fundamentalist perspectives that would not allow new understandings to arise during the course of the interview.

My dissertation chair and I used word-of-mouth and a participant recruitment flyer (Appendix D) among several psychological and spiritual communities in the San Francisco Bay Area, California to select interview participants from the four psychospiritual traditions under investigation. I sought participants who were both interested in inquiring into how we acquire trustworthy knowledge in psychospiritual practice and who would be comfortable with the experience of not knowing during the interview process. Ideally, they would be willing to speak from the edge of their evolving understanding with a curious, objective, and non-defensive attitude towards their cognitive, affective, and spiritual insights.

I was also interested in participants who prioritized direct experience over interpreted meaning or theory and who were willing to discuss their experience in the spirit of genuine open inquiry. Such individuals would more likely than not feel that there is a value in the power of describing one's path through stories, while recognizing the utility of description in helping others achieve their own level of experiential understanding. Finally, I sought participants well-versed in the language and theory of their respective tradition/s so that they would be able to discuss their experience in the context of traditional teachings.

Participants

A total of 8 subjects participated in this study, including 6 men and 2 women. The participants' average age was 55 years and the average amount of time practicing in their psychospiritual tradition was 30 years. Five of the participants were European-American, 2 were Tibetan, and 1 was Middle Eastern. The participants came from a variety of sociocultural backgrounds and were raised in a variety of Judeo-Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic spiritual traditions. All were spiritual teachers, shamanic healers, or Jungian psychotherapists by profession, and 5 of the 8 participants identified as actively practicing in more than one psychospiritual tradition.

Buddhist Practitioner # 1 [B1]

Buddhist practitioner #1 [B1] is a Tibetan male, born and raised in India to parents who were themselves accomplished practitioners in the

non-celibate Nyingma tradition of Vajrayana Buddhism. [B1] attended college at Varanasi Sanskrit University before leaving for Nepal to complete a 6-year retreat in the Nyingma tradition under the tutelage of his root guru, who acknowledged his stature of “Vajra Master.” Rinpoche currently lives with his family in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, where he instructs Vajrayana Buddhism to a dedicated sangha, returning to Nepal on a yearly basis to assist in the instruction of the monks at his root teacher’s monastery.

Buddhist Practitioner # 2 [B2]

Buddhist practitioner # 2 [B2] is a Tibetan male, born and raised in Tibet and recognized in childhood as a Tulku, the reincarnation of a previous high lama. [B2] entered into Buddhist training in a Nyingma monastery at a young age by choice and after 17 years of residence there renounced his vows as a monk in order to practice and instruct the dharma as a layperson in the West. When not traveling to teach, Rinpoche currently lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, where he instructs Vajrayana Buddhism to a dedicated sangha.

Shamanic/Buddhist Practitioner [S/B]

Shamanic/Buddhist practitioner [S/B] is a Caucasian male, born and raised in the United States, who worked for many years as a physical surgeon before developing an interest in noninvasive healing approaches. [S/B] currently practices as a nontraditional shamanic healer, working on an ongoing basis with the *Mimosa hostilis* plant and engaging in a unique

form of psychospiritual surgery that restores imbalances in the mind, body, and spirit. [S/B] currently lives with his wife at the end of a long road, as befits a traditional shaman, in the hills of northern California, where new clients continually seek him out for his reputation as a healer.

Shamanic Practitioner [S]

Shamanic practitioner [S] is a Caucasian male, born and raised in Canada, and is an educator, writer, and nonnative *ayahuascero*, traveling regularly to South America to brew the *ayahuasca* concoction in service of group and individual healing ceremonies. [S] served as a high school principal for many years before dedicating his life's work to helping to guide others through experiences with this entheogen in the Ecuadorian Amazon. [S] currently lives with his wife, also an *ayahuascera*, both in northern California and South America.

Diamond Logos/Buddhist Practitioner [D/B]

Diamond Logos/Buddhist practitioner [D/B] is a Caucasian female, born and raised in the United States, a Diamond Logos instructor for many years, and one of the first Western women to be authorized as a lama in the Vajrayana tradition. [D/B] completed a 3-year retreat in the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism and has studied with many of the great Tibetan masters from all lineages. [D/B] currently instructs the Diamond Logos teachings and Vajrayana Buddhism to her own sangha and others in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, where she lives with her family.

Diamond Logos Practitioner [D]

Diamond Logos practitioner [D] is a Kuwaiti male, born and raised in Kuwait, who has worked for many years to integrate diverse psychospiritual teachings into a unique methodology of personal development. [D] is a psychospiritual teacher and trained Reichian therapist, having studied in depth different systems of growth, including Sufism, Buddhism, the Enneagram, and gestalt psychology. He has been teaching in the Middle East and the United States for the last 25 years and is currently living in the San Francisco Bay Area, California.

Jungian Practitioner # 1 [J1]

Jungian practitioner [J1] is a Caucasian female, born and raised in the United States. [J1] has been a Jungian analyst for over 20 years, working both in private practice and in affiliation with the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. She has engaged in intensive training in the Lakota tradition of healing through the ritual use of Sundances and sweat lodges, maintains an active participation in the integration of Jungian and shamanic practices, and lives with her family in the San Francisco Bay Area, California.

Jungian Practitioner # 2 [J2]

Jungian practitioner [J2] is a Caucasian male, born and raised in the United States. [J2] was trained as a Jungian analyst at the C. G. Jung Institut-Zürich, before returning to the United States to work for many years both in private practice and at the C. G. Jung Institute of San

Francisco, with which he has felt a longstanding intuitive connection. [J2] lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, and is currently writing a book addressing personal and Jungian themes of individuation and death.

Interview Protocol

After reviewing the *Participant Consent and Confidentiality Form*, *Confidentiality Statement*, and *Bill of Rights for Participants in Psychological Research* forms (Appendices F, G, H) with the final participants selected from the screening questionnaire pool, I read them aloud the central inquiry at the outset of our interview. This orienting interview question was: “What has been your lived experience of ‘inner guidance’ and how does it make sense within your understanding of your psychospiritual tradition?” I did not expect a direct response to this initial question, using it only to orient the participant to the overarching theme of the interview.

Following the orienting question I asked the participants 15 open-ended and semi-structured interview questions, allowing for flexibility and improvisation based upon the interviewees’ responses. While these questions are chronologically organized for ease of reference, I did not necessarily ask them in order, but sought to ensure that their entire content was satisfactorily addressed during the interview. The average length of each interview was 90 minutes. As will be later clarified at length in the Discussion section, this study’s inquiry began with a particular interest in “inner guidance” experience, which is thus the terminology I used in the interviews. The interview responses, however, led to a reevaluation of the adequacy of this initial theoretical construct.

Interview Questions

Central Inquiry (Described at the outset of the interview as the overarching and orienting inquiry):

1. What has been your lived experience of “inner guidance” and how does it make sense within your understanding of your psychospiritual tradition?

Auxiliary Questions/Past:

2. How did you initially come to locate or identify this source or process of inner guidance?

3. Were there instances in your childhood in which you located or identified this source or process of inner guidance?

4. Has inner guidance taken different forms or ways of showing itself in your life?

5. How did you know that you could trust in this source or process? How do you discriminate between authentic and false confidence in relation to trusting guidance?

6. Was there a developmental aspect to your inner guidance in regard to trust, kinds of information, and its ways of appearing?

Auxiliary Questions/Present:

7. How has your reliance upon inner guidance worked for you with outer forms of guidance from reading and teachers?

8. Is there sometimes a tension or balancing act between your inner guidance and what teachers or teachings have said?

9. Can you give present examples of such a tension or balancing act at play in your life?

10. Do you feel your current relationship to inner guidance is still developing or evolving?

11. Does the strength or presence of your inner guidance vary over time? If so, how do you respond to those times when inner guidance is less available? How do you respond to not having inner guidance?

12. How about right now? Are you in a place in your life right now where you are trying to make any decisions? Is there something you are going through right now that can serve as an example?

Auxiliary Questions/Future:

13. How does your inner guidance help you in knowing how to prioritize, decide upon, begin, and embody specific spiritual orientations and practices? Can you give some examples of imminent decisions that you might be facing in this domain?

14. Did you at any time notice that some form of inner guidance was operating during this interview? Did you draw upon your sources of guidance during our talk, including now?

15. If you make use of a certain strategy to access inner guidance, could I invite you to try that now?

Working with NVivo 7 Qualitative Research Software

I developed thematic categories with the assistance of a computer program called QSR Nvivo 7, a qualitative research tool for organizing textual data, which facilitated my analysis of the voluminous data and helped reveal associative patterns across the transcripts. This process consisted largely of distilling *source text elements* down to the roughly 100

listed in Appendix B and nearly 75 listed in the Results section overview in Appendix A, while simultaneously gathering textual evidence of each. This organizational project would have been far more difficult to achieve without the use of this software (Bazeley, 2007).

Because psychospiritual guidance has not been substantially investigated in the psychological research literature, no developed codes yet exist for this phenomenon. In the belief that detailed themes can significantly help to shed light on a subject, I coded each transcript word by word to establish confidence that my source text elements constituted irreducible initial building blocks of thematic content that were as grounded in the interview data as possible. This intensive process in addition facilitated an increasingly intimate relationship with the transcript data. Nvivo 7 also proved to be instrumental in helping me to assemble composite quotes for recurrent themes, efficiently highlighting similarities across respondents about particular aspects of guidance.

Working with the Inter-rater

Including more than one person in the thematic analysis process is essential to mitigate researcher bias. The present study achieved reliability of its distilled themes by having two individuals code several transcripts with eventual 95% concordance of results. Evidence for the resultant code's reliability is found both in the consistency of the two coders' evaluation of the code and in the stability of the code across eight interview transcripts. According to Boyatzis (1998),

Converting themes into codes and then counting presence, frequency, or intensity does not in and of itself create a link between qualitative and quantitative methods. The computation or articulation of inter-rater reliability, or convergence of perception of multiple judges, must occur as well...Thematic analysis with reliability also allows the interpretive social scientist to generate qualitative hypotheses that provide a basis for a positivist social scientist to conduct qualitative or quantitative hypothesis testing as part of the building process of science...Thematic analysis allows the interpretive social scientist's social construction of meaning to be articulated or packaged in such a way, with reliability as consistency of judgment, that description of social "facts" or observations seem to emerge. (p. xiii)

I tested the validity and reliability of my themes with the assistance of an inter-rater, who reviewed and corroborated the definitions and validity of the major themes that I selected to highlight exemplary aspects of my participants' narratives in regard to guidance. We first reached agreement on theme definitions so as to establish inter-rater reliability. In preparation for this, I defined my themes according to Boyatzis' (1998) five constituents of a well-defined theme and gave these definitions to my inter-rater. These five constituents are:

1. A label (i.e., a name),
2. A definition of what the theme concerns (i.e., the characteristic of issue constituting the theme),
3. A description of how to know when the theme occurs (i.e., indicators on how to "flag" the theme),
4. A description of any qualifications or exclusions to the identification of the theme,
5. Examples, both positive and negative, to eliminate possible confusion when looking for the theme (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 31).

Five examples of these source text element definition criteria from one transcript are included in Appendix C, revealing a snapshot of their evolution during the initial stage of development. Creating detailed definition criteria significantly increased the likelihood of subsequent inter-rater discernment between themes, thus increasing the probability of eventual confirmation and reliability. I submitted five of my source text elements to my inter-rater with which to analyze three randomly selected transcripts. My inter-rater and I first reviewed together the selected themes and their constituent definitions and analyzed 10 pages each of the three transcripts, taking note when any of the five themes arose. We then compared results, discussing discrepancies until we arrived at a shared understanding of the themes, which in turn altered their definitions.

The inter-rater and I coded in this way together until we reached a 95% accuracy of consensus on the number of times the themes emerged in the transcript selections. Once the inter-rater and I felt confident that there were no more significant discrepancies between themes, we coded three final interviews with the newly established code. As was expected, this coding process involved only minor changes to the thematic definitions. At this stage of the process, both the inter-rater and I concluded that the refined thematic code would be sufficiently representative of all the transcripts. Pattern recognition is a highly intuitive process, and our collaborating discussion was indispensable to reaching a greater, if far from perfect, degree of objectivity in discerning salient patterns in the interview texts. However, it is still possible that I overlooked a theme entirely before initially submitting the themes to the inter-rater.

The issue of validity concerns whether the derived themes reveal qualities of the data that are legitimate, essential, and relevant to the phenomenon in question. According to Boyatzis (1998), “Validity of findings cannot conceptually exceed the reliability of the judgments made in coding or processing the raw information” (p. 144). The inter-rater reliability depends upon the validity of the data, because a high correlation of agreement on the validity of the themes themselves is an indispensable precondition to proceeding with the inter-rating process. I tried as much as possible to mitigate this endemic risk to thematic analysis by continuing to review the themes and their rule-outs with my inter-rater until we were both persuaded that we had reached thematic saturation (Moustakas, 1994).

Developing Themes

I initiated the process of analyzing the themes by using the NVivo 7 software to code a comprehensive list of “source text elements”—words or phrases that recur explicitly and often enough in the interview transcripts to warrant reference. These irreducible elements of the data served as the primary building blocks of the more abstract thematic categories to follow. The source text element grouping procedure constitutes the lowest level of textual analysis in this study and can be understood as first-order coding. Eventually, after re-reading each transcript several times, I reached a stage of thematic saturation in which no new source text elements arose from my data. Such saturation cued me to my readiness to transition from generating manifest themes to distilling and organizing them.

I next reviewed the list of source text elements with the intention of collapsing these basic units of overtly shared meaning into abstracted categories not overtly mentioned in the text. This next level of data abstraction emerged as “stage attribute dimensions,” second-order codes abstracted from the source text elements, which organized these many themes into more comprehensible patterns. I finally distilled these stage attribute dimensions into eight general “stage attributes,” patterns of experience that seemed to share the most common ground across research participants. The stage attributes are third-order codes, representing the broadest patterns of individual experiences across the four psychospiritual traditions under examination. The original source text elements can thus also be understood as “attributes of the stage attribute dimensions.”

Upon completion of this refinement process I additionally categorized the interviewees’ responses according to my 15 interview questions so as to help ensure that the quotations derived from NVivo 7 were not too abstracted from the contextualizing questions used in the study. I also drew thematic maps to better see potential patterns in my data, using the visual proximity of emergent themes to represent their closeness of relationship to the central phenomenon of guidance. These concept maps resembled mandalas, helping me to see patterns among the themes according to how they were spatially grouped.

I chose to include the entire interview transcripts in Appendix I in order to preserve the nuances of the participants’ unique journeys. Such nuance can be lost in even the most astute of thematic comparisons, which

inevitably sacrifice detail as more abstract themes are developed. Future researchers will be able to use this data to verify my methodological process, and general readers or practitioners may find these compelling autobiographical narratives to be of personal interest.

The Thematic Analysis Coding Structure outlined in Appendix A provides an overview of the thematic findings, including the source text elements, and allows for easy reference as a detailed table of contents of study results. Appendix B meanwhile contains the comprehensive list of source text elements, including the synonymous descriptors of each that were used to generate themes. This appendix may also be used as an index of the original source text elements in the transcripts, as many of these were not shared by most or all practitioners and therefore did not emerge as shared themes in the thematic analysis coding structure and final results summary. However, these original source text elements may be of interest to future researchers who wish to derive additional information on any given theme from the interview transcripts in Appendix I.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The inner, spiritual voyage...begins at the point when the teaching becomes an event of the soul. Likewise, the voyage is a sign of transition, when the teaching undergoes a metamorphosis, fulfilling itself in events which are personally lived. It is at this decisive juncture that the Messenger's role intervenes... "embodied" in the personal form of the Guide or the Angel, at the horizon of inner vision. (Corbin, 1998, p. 142)

Overview of Thematic Analysis Results

This section presents the data reduction results, while the Discussion section that follows expands on and interprets these results. To survey the results in a summary way, first read the following outline overview and subsequent paragraph on pp. 78-79, which together briefly encapsulate the stages and stage attributes of the guidance process as experienced by the majority of the study participants. Then skip to the beginning of the Discussion section, which provides a more concise but rich review of the thematic material. Those interested in a more in-depth examination of the results themselves will find the multi-staged themes presented in detail in this section.

All eight narratives reveal shared stages of guidance and common defining attributes of each stage, outlined and described below. The following list shows both these stages and the stage attributes, whereas the subsequent narrative summary of this outline suggests that psychospiritual guidance may entail an inherent archetypal developmental sequence.

Overview of Stages and Stage Attributes of Guidance

Stage I. Preparing For Guidance (Pre)

Stage Attribute 1. Facilitating Conditions for Guidance

Stage Attribute 2. Initiating Actions and Embodiments for Guidance

Stage Attribute 3. Inhibitory Actions and Embodiments for Guidance

Stage II. Experiencing Guidance (Mid)

Stage Attribute 4. Manifestations of Guidance

Stage III. Integrating Guidance (Post)

Stage Attribute 5. Authenticating Guidance

Stage Attribute 6. Developmental Trends to Guidance

Stage Attribute 7. Inauthentic Expressions of Guidance

Stage IV. Transcending Guidance (Post-Post)

Stage Attribute 8. Moving Beyond Guidance

As they were growing up, all of the study participants benefited from internal and external conditions—attributable to nature and nurture and involving both suffering and grace—that were conducive to the development of psychospiritual guidance. They then engaged in the psychospiritual practices of one or more established traditions that activated a variety of guidance processes, states, and beings. The participants reported that guidance emerged in all realms of reality, from the manifest to the absolute, illuminating and bridging both one's personal life path and universal nondual truth. In the particular language of their own developmental processes, they all discussed guidance as a capacity that becomes increasingly available over time as a result of awakening from increasingly subtle states of conditioning. Although the developmental guidance process is by definition sequential as it unfolds

in time, it does not necessarily appear to be linear. Having received guidance, the participants emphasized that it was still necessary to discern both its authenticity and its meaning. The participants also discussed conditions and actions that can inhibit guidance, as well as the potential risks involved in misinterpreting its meaning. The collected narratives affirm that guidance is both generic and unique, revealing individual pathways to universal truths.

Summary of Stages and Stage Attributes of Guidance

I am using a sequential coding structure since it seems to most adequately organize the voluminous data while preserving the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation. The four stages and eight stage attributes tell the essential collective story of psychospiritual guidance as experienced by the study participants, ranging from its earliest manifestation in their lives to their current experience and understanding of it. Below is a lengthier encapsulation of how these stage attributes unfolded in the collective context of their lives. I should note that both my categorical coding strategy and definitions of the themes reflect only one of many ways in which these attributes might have been defined, organized, and analyzed.

The Islamic studies philosopher Henry Corbin (1998) cites the “voyage” as Islamic Gnosticism’s central metaphor describing the soul’s awakening to its true nature. “Most often,” he writes, the voyage “includes the figure of a messenger, beckoning one towards the

undertaking” (p. 135). In accord with this metaphor, the four sequential categories of “Pre/Mid/Post/Post-Post” situate the data within an overarching temporal framework, appropriate to the fact that guidance reveals itself in the data to be a developmental phenomenon analogous to a journey. As mentioned, because each “stage” appears to influence and be influenced by the others throughout the experience and evolution of the phenomenon, these sequential phases are not strictly linear.

The prescriptive “Pre” stage is comprised of conditions and activities that help participants to prepare for receiving psychospiritual guidance. During this stage the participants immersed themselves in contexts and/or activities that ultimately proved to be conducive to evoking, inducing, or in some way preparing for the emergence of psychospiritual guidance. The Pre stage has to do with orienting to psychospiritual guidance, preparing the ground for it, or setting the stage for its emergence. “Both ontologically and etymologically, the idea of this voyage presupposes an *orientation*. To orient oneself is to discover *where* one is” (Corbin, 1998, p. 142). This orientation phase of the developmental process is akin to extending a radio’s antennae in a certain direction to pick up a signal.

The descriptive “Mid” stage includes the diverse ways in which guidance manifests and is experienced. My discussion of this stage illuminates the variety of ways that participants experienced the arising of guidance and recognized what it was. I examine these experiences both as a pivotal snapshot of a moment and an unfolding process. The Mid stage themes that emerged can be interpreted as being concerned with

alignment. This may be understood via the radio metaphor as tuning in to particular frequencies of guidance. To carry this metaphor further, it appears that the participants' energetic channels are increasingly primed to receive the expansive bandwidth of guidance information that is always available, if not always apparent.

The "Post" stage themes involve authentication procedures and consequences of the guidance experience. This stage highlights signposts of the realization of guidance, including both discerning criteria for validating its authenticity and the evolving dynamics and integration of the phenomenon. The final "Post-Post" stage is comprised of experiences and perspectives that lie beyond the realm of guidance; that is, guidance per se was no longer applicable or meaningful to an individual's psychospiritual development.

I complement my sequential analysis of psychospiritual guidance, which contains both snapshots and developmental lenses through which to perceive the phenomenon, with a presentation of factors that inhibit the capacity to recognize or receive guidance. In addition to obstructing the arising, receiving, and integration of guidance, these inhibitory factors also appear to produce inauthentic perceptions and expressions of guidance.

Because the experiential means for cultivating guidance and the end result of guidance often appear to be the same, it is frequently difficult to parse or tease apart those attitudes and contexts that lead to successful experiences of psychospiritual guidance. For this reason, in engaging with the data it is sometimes challenging to distinguish

facilitating factors from consequences of experience; the two appear to be in constant feedback, if not in fact mirroring each other. Similarly, the psychophysical effects of guidance are likely to influence experience, just as its pivotal moments and unfolding experiences are likely to inform each other.

It is thus important to keep in mind that the Post stage may continually influence both the Pre and Mid stages. This influence creates an ongoing and evolving feedback loop of information in which integrated experience modifies contextual factors as a result of newly learned behaviors and adaptations to new ways of being in the world, which themselves in turn alter direct experience. Indeed, such integration may occur during the guidance experience itself as the ego is reconstituted in the course of the phenomenon's emergence.

In the Summary of Results that follows, I am using APA heading level 2 for the stages [*Preparing for Guidance*] (centered, italic, title case); level 3 for stage attributes [*Facilitating Conditions for Guidance*] (aligned left, italic, title case); level 4 for stage attribute dimensions [*Predispositional influences.*] (indented, italic, sentence case, ending with period); and simply italicizing the source text element categories, followed by an em-dash (e.g., *Recognition of true nature— / Recognition of life path— / Inner sensing and Intuition— / Empathic sensitivity—*). Visually, a sample of the initial heading levels described above looks like this:

Stage 1: Preparing for Guidance (Pre)

Facilitating Conditions for Guidance

Predispositional influences.

Recognition of true nature—

Recognition of life path—

Inner sensing and Intuition—

Empathic sensitivity—

All levels of attributes are included in the Results section in order to give a detailed list of the major associative components of guidance found in the study. In the following presentation of emergent themes of all levels, each theme name is followed by a double-spaced composite definition paraphrasing the participant responses that best speak to the theme's general meaning. This collectively informed composite definition is followed by single-spaced paraphrased reflections on various dimensions or facets of the theme, again utilizing as much of the participants' original wording as possible. These paraphrases may be in the form of autobiographical reportage, descriptive observations, or general prescriptions for others, and are thus variously presented in the first, second, and third person voices in order to best reflect the participants' contextualized remarks.

Finally, a single-spaced representative direct quotation from a participant that best personalizes and captures the spirit of the theme concludes each source text element entry. In the cases in which two or more closely related source text elements have been grouped together in

the same entry, such as “Inner sensing and Intuition,” each source element is capitalized and one quotation for each element may be included, separated by a semi-colon.

To make this presentation style clear, I am departing slightly from APA style and putting quotation marks around these second block quotes to distinguish between the direct quotations and the paraphrased material. Both the order and length of presentation of the source text elements are in general accordance to the import accorded them by the study participants.

Each textual paraphrase and direct quotation is preceded by the participants’ designated initial(s), which are as follows: [B1] Buddhist # 1; [B2] Buddhist # 2; [S/B] Shaman/Buddhist; [S] Shaman; [D/B] Diamond Logos/Buddhist; [D] Diamond Logos; [J1] Jungian # 1; [J2] Jungian # 2.

Summary of Results

Stage 1: Preparing for Guidance (Pre)

Facilitating Conditions for Guidance

The presence of conditions that facilitate receiving psychospiritual guidance appear to enhance the likelihood that guidance will manifest. Examples of factors that precede the experience of guidance are individual attributes, attitudes, environmental influences, and life experiences. Such conditions include both an individual’s “set,” or character structure and predispositions, as well as their “setting,” or circumstantial influences.

Predispositional influences.

Predispositional influences such as genetic and learned attributes and attitudes support the change of motivation and perception that encourage the recognition of and ongoing receptivity to guidance. Among these influences are shared human endowments and unique inherited characteristics and acquired capacities.

Recognition of true nature—Unobstructed awareness and compassion is everyone's birthright, revealing itself as one's true nature when all perceptual obscurations have been unveiled. This birthright is often described in nondual terms such as enlightenment, Buddha nature, individual clear light consciousness, the true or higher Self, or one's ultimate identity as the center of the universe. Depending on the source tradition and the individual, it is also expressed in dualistic language, including the recognition of one's Beloved, relating with God, and experiencing the presence of Being—the essential self as an individualized expression of undifferentiated and absolute awareness. This essential self is understood to incorporate an innate guidance system that orients the individual towards the source of its Being and the opportunity to abide in an awareness of ultimate reality. Awareness of this essential nature motivates individuals to deepen their experience of it, which in turn intensifies or amplifies the search for guidance. Those who are conscious of this pure dimension of being are far more likely to make use of guidance strategies to further awaken to it.

[B1] Guidance is not so much about finding all the right directions in the mundane world as it is about discovering one's true nature as the sublime Buddha. [B2] The purpose of guidance is to awaken to one's innate and essential absolute nature, the primordial intelligence that is a reflection of our truest and deepest reality. [D] The guidance will take you to your point of light, to the individual soul, which is personal enlightenment, before revealing the great revelation of liberation in the absolute.

[D/B] "it's called in Diamond work 'the point of light' ... I think that's the same as what they call in the highest level of Buddhist tantra 'individual clear light consciousness.' And in ordinary terms we would call that our 'higher self.' And that part of us is always with us. You could also call it the Beloved. But we're not aware of it. It's like we're separate from that. You know, it's like saying we're never not one with God, but we don't realize that. Or we're never out of awakening, but we never realize that. So that part of our self, and it is inseparable from the absolute and it's inseparable with all awakened, you know, other awakened beings or whatever. That part of us knows what's happening. And knows that guidance for us, it *is* guiding us. But you know, we have to stay open to it."

Recognition of life path—One's life path may be interpreted as a personal enactment of the archetypal "hero's journey." Guidance may reveal, over time or as a spontaneous insight, one's special purpose or mission. There is a sense of continuously being guided along a unique path of awakening to true nature, which may be interpreted as aligning with one's destiny or realizing one's individual contribution on behalf of the totality of evolution. This calling may be experienced as a prolonged yearning or inspiration, a knowing confidence, a delineated pathway that intuitively feels right, or a higher intelligence that assists the skillful navigation of one's path. As with one's true nature, mere awareness of this birthright deepens one's conviction of the relevance of guidance in one's life.

[D/B] When three years old I experienced an inner knowing of a mission to complete here in the world that firmly established my confidence in guidance. I realize that positive karma due to past life achievement is making possible this current life path. [D] Guidance helps one cultivate the wisdom to navigate harmoniously within eternal evolution. Guidance appears in a myriad of ways as grace, diamonds, space, differentiation, integration, and objectivity in order to reveal one's soul's true purpose. All souls' purposes are equal and essential. [J1] Following one's inner guide can reveal itself to be a right path in and of itself. One is likely to recognize consistencies of experience with the teachings of traditions while also following a unique path that intuitively feels right.

[D/B] "When we really open to the point of light...you understand your life purpose without a shadow of a doubt."

Inner sensing and Intuition—Evolved clairvoyant capacities, all of which help one to more easily recognize guidance. These capacities include inner seeing and hearing, unerring intuition, divination, and a wordless certainty of deep and direct knowingness.

[S/B] I often acted on a hunch throughout life and followed an inevitable pathway delineated by a voice and a confirmed sense of knowing which was the right choice. [S] I saw and felt mental pictures of other children's suffering at an early age and realized that many others shared in this kind of experience. [D/B] Inner knowing has always been available, including energetic seeing, sensing, and feeling in both the personal and collective unconscious. Sometimes this involves a deep knowing and unwavering conviction, revealing the absolute nature of a phenomenon instead of its relative and temporal aspects. I occasionally use divination for confirmatory guidance in the material realm. Inner seeing helped me remain open to guidance even during this interview. [J1] I trained my intuition through self-expressive and creative exercises, which served as a catalyst for the arrival of my spirit ally.

[D] "I love inner seeing. I am addicted to seeing, I love to see. Instead of watching so much TV, I love to close my eyes and see the visionary realms: images, visions, states of being. And the guidance was holding my hand as I moved through the different depths and different gradations of seeing...Since I am a seer, I can often see the deity in my

head, heart or belly, depending where it wants to manifest and/or guide me. This is like cheating, since not everyone has this capacity.”

Empathic sensitivity—A heightened capacity for tuning into and feeling another’s experience, with particular sensitivity to others’ suffering.

[S/B] As a child I was able to use empathic powers that let me be a sort of chameleon and adapt to challenging surroundings to feel less lonely. [S] As a child I found myself developing empathy and compassion for myself and my guides. [J1] Guidance is in service of empathic attunement with others.

[S/B] “I’m an empath. I mean, if we put it in psychological terms, I can see, feel, touch, be with you and know you instantaneously.”

Environmental influences.

These circumstantial influences refer to an individual's past and current contextual settings, including both social and cultural surroundings.

Mentors—‘Outer’ teachers, gurus, advisors, and analysts. Mentors are appreciated as essential agents who empower one to trust in both inner and outer sources of guidance; students in turn develop a more egalitarian stance towards their mentors over time. This relationship ranges in scope from an analyst encouraging trust through a safe and healing holding environment, to a teacher who strengthens dormant capacities such as inner seeing, to an outer guru awakening one’s own inner guru, to a reliable friend guiding one through personal ancestral teachings or auspicious rebirths. Whether one chooses to study exclusively under one teacher or with a wide range of mentors, it is critical

at some point in life to receive training by individuals with seasoned experience in a particular psychospiritual tradition.

[B1] It is important for novice and shaky practitioners to connect regularly with their guru to refresh their inner guidance. One may ask a teacher for guidance on many levels, including spiritual and material, and may consult with them even if they are not physically present by using visualization, prayer, and devotion to evoke the guru's inconceivable compassion. A strong student-teacher connection that allows for patient instruction to empower and ripen the student's mind is essential to spiritual development. [B2] There will never be tension with true teachers if one trusts in oneself to discern true from false, as one's own true guidance will never ultimately conflict with that of a selfless teacher. Maintaining a pure vision of one's guru as a living Buddha is a skillful means to eventually inspire such an attitude towards all beings. Paradoxically, it is also important that the student recognize the guru as fallible in order to avoid over-idealization and disappointment. Codependent relationships with a teacher may arise if the teacher discourages students from trusting their own inner guidance; the ideal spiritual counselor emphatically empowers others to access their innate strengths in realizing their personal inner guidance. [S/B] Over time and eclectic exploration, I came to appreciate the importance of submitting myself to a particular teacher, while being as selfish as possible in acquiring teachings of selflessness from those who had already mapped out the spiritual territory. Certain North American professors using entheogens in clinical treatment were my first teachers; they trained my wild being in ways that were acceptable to me and others. I recently recognized a Tibetan Rinpoche as my root guru, and I trust him as an ultimate guide in the bardo [transitional] states through and beyond death. [S] I have encountered influential teachers throughout my life and in all walks of life; I recognized some as sources of wisdom and energy, and late in life suddenly recognized the spirit of a deceased Hindu guru as one of my main teachers. [D/B] While I have consulted with many realized teachers throughout my life, I recognized instantaneously following intensive prayer that the guidance of a particular Tibetan Rinpoche was to be my ultimate source of outer guidance in this lifetime. Teachers need to help students develop spiritual discernment, especially in the West where individuals are not as adept at gauging the authenticity of spiritual teachers. [J2] I initially distrusted my inner guide due to the early influence of untrustworthy mentors, but

came to establish a deep trust in my inner guidance through a trusting relationship with my analyst.

[S/B] “You can get it if you allow yourself to be released to a teacher. In other words, I take refuge in a teacher and that teacher will teach me *the way*. And I’m secure in the format my teacher already has and he will be my guru through the way, whether it be shamanism or whether it be Vajrayana or anything else. That didn’t particularly occur to me until very late in life...I would say that by following the various teachers in Vajrayana Buddhism and considering the various teachings that I’ve gone to and empowerments, certainly there’s been a developmental aspect of it...It gave me more of a construct of a me...Well, the teachers would teach certain aspects of being-ness or of non-being-ness that I was or I wasn’t. So I could look at that. They had a structure, an organized form, a mandala, that I could take and work with. And when I worked with that, I could walk out the door and do more of a me.”

Psychospiritual traditions—Traditional wisdom teachings and belief systems. All participants expressed a recognition of indebtedness to one or more traditions that helped them access both inner and outer sources of guidance. Whether or not exclusively aligned with a particular tradition, all retained gratitude for the value of every tradition they had engaged in. Although they ultimately needed to follow their own unique paths in order to embody what they learned, many participants spoke of learning universal truths through traditional teachings. The selected four traditions and their adherents all acknowledged the value of direct communion with the sacred beyond any mediating dogma or doctrine.

[B2] Inner guidance is always ultimately in alignment with the traditional Buddhist teachings. [S/B] My life-long syncretic practice, rooted in the desire to experience as many flavors of teachings as possible, evolved into an appreciation of the importance of dedicating my study to a particular format and working developmentally with teachers and organizational frameworks. The framework of psychotherapy is helpful alongside spiritual practice to make sense of one’s life path. [D/B] I experience an ongoing

synergy between the Vajrayana and Diamond Logos practices. [D] All lineages of transmission have unique imprints of guidance while drawing inspiration from and teaching towards the same absolute realm of pure awareness. [J1] I discovered an alignment between a uniquely personal calling and the traditions of Jungian psychology and shamanic wisdom.

[D/B] “I think the more you go onto the spiritual path, when you read memoirs of other people or things they’ve said, and you read texts, you start to find a lot of correlation.”

Family and Community—Supportive relationships that encourage dialogue and consultation. Guidance is strengthened by support and encouragement. Especially helpful are conversation and collaboration, feeling a good connection with another person, appreciating one’s ultimate equality with others, and having one’s experience affirmed or confirmed by others. Conflicts arising between reliable inner and outer messages of guidance usually can be ascribed to a lack of complete information, often arising from cultural gaps between a student and teacher. Sociocultural conditions and childhood experiences proved to be inconsistent among the participants, ranging from stable and supportive to chaotic and alienating. Whether or not they had felt safe and loved in their family of origin, most subjects indicated that when they were young their sense of guidance had been strengthened by the clear and reliable loving support of at least one family member. Normalization of spiritual experience at a young age also proved to be very helpful for several participants. The role of a spiritual community, or sangha, was cited as strengthening both individual intentions and inner guidance, as was the acknowledgment of the support of one’s ancestors.

[S/B] Healing requires partnership and mutual assent. Sanghas can be of tremendous benefit in entheogen practice, providing mutual support for its members. [S] It is difficult finding one's own way in a culture like the United States where no reliable underpinnings of consciousness are available due to the trivialization and abomination of the sacred. [D/B] I feel I was born into a culture bereft of spiritual energy, that of the modern West. Relationships, including dialogue with trusted friends and consultation with teachers, have been very important in remedying this feeling and empowering my own sense of guidance. Though guidance is ultimately a personal process, inquiry in the presence of another can be helpful. [D] In the beginning, I connected to and trusted guidance through the compassionate image of several loving elders. Guidance reveals the need to become conscious of one's earliest unconscious childhood programming in both the physical and spiritual domains in this lifetime, which will include all previous reincarnations. Friendships with others were critical in developing the Diamond Logos teachings.

[B1] "I was fortunate, since being born in that spiritual community and having met these wonderful masters...gave me an opportunity to reflect and grow and to directly see the inner guidance...For me, when I was growing up, my family was all practitioners, spiritual practitioners. And they were always, you know, anything happens there was spiritual involvement."

Conditions and Timing—Favorable physical surroundings and temporal circumstances for guidance to arise. Calm, quiet, clean, and beautiful surroundings tend to encourage guidance, whereas high stimulus and distracting environments—as well as circumstances that instigate dissatisfaction, disharmony, and unrest—will inhibit it. Guidance calls for varying temporal strategies for different circumstances, including both immediate action and postponement of action. Impatience and haste are likely, however, to impede guidance under any circumstances.

[B1] The right circumstances and conditions must be met to support the arising of inner guidance. These contexts can range from growing up in a spiritual community that emphasizes spirituality to creating a still space to relax and

plug into the invigorating energy that is guidance. Ultimately, all experiences can be awakening if approached skillfully. [B2] Silence and stillness help to reveal the messages of inner guidance and to discern them from the mental static of the ego. [S] While waiting patiently to allow the clarity of truth to manifest is a useful way to receive guidance, taking ad hoc action and feeling out the results is helpful when waiting is not possible. [D/B] I remained open to receiving guidance in little pieces over long periods of time, culminating in my foundation of a spiritual teaching center. [D] The Diamond Body is the maestro that orchestrates information, feelings, energy, action, and the essential domain, either at different times or all at once. It can instantaneously reveal an entire vision that takes one many years to differentiate as knowledge, or demonstrate its long range vision into time and space, illuminating pieces of information over time for one to discover and assemble. Guidance is often compelling in the beginning, disappointing and painful in the middle, and liberating in the end. [J1] The communication with my ally occurs in real-time, such as now during this interview.

[S] “The set and setting has to be pretty calm and quiet.”; [S] “So sometimes, as I said, when I don't know then I just wait. But there's sometimes, you can't wait, you've got to do something.”

Suffering and Crisis—Chinks in the armor of defended knowing that cause physical and psychological pain and distress. For a number of participants the onset of guidance appears as a disruption of habitual experience, in some cases arising in the form of crisis or wounding. Some spoke to the revelation of guidance through suffering, indicating that ‘where there’s a wound there’s a way.’ Suffering can be a powerful antidote to the false self, whether it acutely disturbs the ego structure or gradually wears it down. Pain may precipitate a shock into a greater awareness of universal truths—such as the illusion of separateness and the nature of impermanence—or may reveal specific information about personal wounding that one can then begin to consciously address.

[S/B] Life seemed to be an obstacle course; continual physical and psychological risk, vulnerability, and crisis served as the vehicles for my guidance. Anxiety and self-doubt also served as necessary precursors preceding guidance in support of healing. If accepted, suffering can be navigated as a portal to guidance. [D] I could initially only pray for connection and guidance to deal with the immensity of lostness, darkness, and pain in my childhood. The healing of guidance exists in one's very wounds.

[S] "Most of the time the spirits will not reveal themselves until we're in pain, until we're deeply suffering. And then we're feeling and then [laughs] it's like 'Ahh! Hello! Hello, welcome aboard!'"

Grace and Blessings—The numinous experience of revelation or of being the recipient of fortune, either through transmission from another or as a spontaneous occurrence. Such epiphanies or auspicious tidings are often experienced as inspiration, good luck, or divine intervention.

[D/B] In Vajrayana practice, we consistently call upon and pray for the blessing and transmission of awakened beings, which evokes their blessings. [D] The Diamond Guidance manifests as the spontaneous realization that is amazing grace. I experienced the inner seeing of the angel Gabriel as a living being who communicated direct knowing and the felt frequency of blessings. Empowerments and transmissions from awakened beings can help through their powers of merging and osmosis to lift one's obscurity to guidance and activate the field of absolute awareness.

[B1] "When mind opens you rest, being with the nature of guru. Then the true blessing. Then it gives you strong impression in your being."; [D] "The guidance itself and the connection to it feel like the utmost grace."

Initiating Actions and Embodiments for Guidance

Activities and orienting stances that are conducive for activating or recognizing guidance include behaviors, attitudes, and states of being.

Guidance is only relevant to one's experience and choices if one has the

underlying conviction that one participates in a meaningful reality and can cooperate with its natural forces. Although actions that help to activate guidance are divided here into two categories of “volitional” and “receptive,” they are perhaps best interpreted as lying along a gradated spectrum between contrivance and non-contrivance, or dynamic and passive. Meditation, for example, somewhat arbitrarily has been labeled a volitional activity here, though might be interpreted by some as more receptive, depending upon the type of meditation practiced.

Volitional activities.

In this context, *volitional* refers to dynamic practices or activities that involve autonomous effort or motivation for something to arise or occur, thus requiring assertive or active participation in one’s experience.

Disciplined practice and Concentration—Structured exercises and ritual practices that encourage the awakening of guidance. All participants commented on active concentration or disciplined practice of some kind. Specific practices mentioned include meditation, prayer, guru and deity yoga, mantra, inquiry, active imagination, dream work, drum work, vision quests, and entheogen use.

[B1] Disciplined practice reveals knowing through one’s felt connection with the practice. Repeated experiences also lead to reassurance and conviction in one’s practice. [D/B] All of my persistent practice in the Vajrayana and Diamond Logos traditions contributed towards the opening up of my inner guidance. [J1] Using a variety of practices to cultivate guidance proved to be helpful.

[B1] “So that you don’t get too carried away with things, discipline. Discipline oneself, OK? This is what I’m going to do. Otherwise we become very wishy-washy. You know, sometimes I like that thing...So discipline is the very important thing here. And once you have the discipline and

not being distracted with things and just keep doing, without having any expectation.”

Prayer and Intention—Supplicating, aspiring, or beseeching for help, direction, or clarity to teachers, spirits, awakened beings, and guidance itself. Opportunities reveal themselves in response to a sustained intention to follow guidance. It is important to have a seeking, willing, and determined attitude while asking for, receiving, and examining guidance, as well the ability to focus one’s attention upon a specific activity for sustained periods of time.

[B1] Determination until complete enlightenment is essential. [B2] A willingness to go deeply inside will reveal one’s innate capacity to discern ego and habit from the unconditioned awareness that is wisdom. [S/B] Prayer is an essential practice of activating guidance. [S] The importance of asking and praying for spirit allies in order to communicate recognition and establish connection is paramount. Focusing upon feeding positive energy helps to activate guidance. Attending to guidance can require sustained mental discipline. [D/B] Inner guidance as a process is often confirmed by signs in response to prayer. After praying to meet my guru, I felt an instantaneous and unwavering knowing of connection upon first seeing him. [D] At the beginning of my journey there was nothing to do but pray for connection and guidance to deal with the immensity of feeling lost in painful darkness, continually beseeching guidance if it was not present. [J1] The power of prayer to assist with healing is immense.

[S] “And just say, ‘Sai Baba, you know, and the angels and my ancestors and sprits of this house and this land, please come and help me.’ And my mind doesn't have to know how to do it. They come...And so I tell the plants and I tell, hey, the prayers of gratitude, and all the spiritual teachers. You know, I don't ask them for things. I say, you know, ‘Please, I'm sending you good energy, keep doing all of your good work.’...Sometimes I just pray, you know. Ask for guidance, ask for help. And with gratitude, you know, ‘What am I supposed to learn here?’...Just ask the medicine...You ask the spirits for help.”

Meditation— The pausing, slowing down, breathing, listening in to, witnessing, and stilling of the mind that encourage enhanced clarity, spaciousness, and spontaneous liberation from conditioned awareness.

[B1] Meditation reveals both a spacious openness of mind and the blessings of one's guru, experiences that make a strong impression upon one's being and strengthen conviction in one's practice. [B2] Meditation provides reliable access to inner guidance, helping one to recognize the transience of fearful and delusional conditioning that obscures our true nature of eternal awareness, wisdom, and love. A silent pause and attention to one's breath is useful to be instantly in touch with inner guidance. [D] Sitting in meditation is one of the best ways to cultivate objective awareness, seeing different states arise and just being with them all without reaction.

[B2] "And therefore it's good to meditate and to be in the silence and completely let yourself reveal what the inner guidance is, and then to realize the message. Whatever you are searching for. In the same way, if you are making even simple decisions in your life. And you can sometimes meditate and be in the silence...I think you can always have access to inner guidance when we meditate a lot. Because inner, deep meditation [is] where you realize that all of fear, all of our delusions, are so transient and they are not the state of true being."

Inquiry and Contemplation—Further reflection that is sometimes required to fully understand guidance from either inner or outer sources. Inquiry is the meditative means of investigating and appreciating information from all senses to explore the totality of one's unfolding experience; this process is distinct from the meditation practice of self-liberation, which waits for wisdom to arise of its own accord when abiding in a state of true nature. Contemplation refers to actively reflecting upon one's experiences in an effort to make sense of them.

[S/B] The use of inquiry to shed false identity in service of discovering one's true nature is invaluable. [S] Inquiring into the content of dreams and thoughts to clarify their

significance is a helpful way to activate one's guidance. [D/B] One can follow the thread of one's unfolding psychosomatic experience in order to receive guidance and unravel psychological blocks to awakening. Inquiry is a powerful practice for somebody on the path of integrating the full realization of the true nature of reality. [D] The skillful means of discerning what one needs from what one wants is a valuable asset to attuning to authentic guidance. This inquiry process involves generating a dialogue between one's ordinary consciousness and one's guidance, from which insights and realization emerge. One can modulate inquiry for greater precision, refining the lens of the ego upon an aspect of itself to connect with guidance.

[D/B] "And the willingness to look, to ask, to look, to be objective and to see and receive what's there... So then, to investigate inquiry is really helpful. Because then you can understand how the ego's feeling."

Active imagination and Dream work—Jungian practices of accessing the imaginal and psychoid realms for wisdom and guidance.

[J1] I first encountered imaginal realm and spirit figures through Assagioli's Psychosynthesis exercises and active imagination in my Jungian analysis. I often use active imagination to return to my dreams to deepen the encounter with the imaginal material brought to my conscious awareness. [J2] Dream work and active imagination are complementary in providing inner guidance. I initiated active imagination with sand tray work with a Jungian analyst to engage my unconscious, using the practice as both a transitional process after analysis and ever since. For me, active imagination entails dialogue with a steadfast, though shifting, figure.

[J2] "I would say that both through the dream work and through the active imagination, that's what I would call inner guidance."

Deities and Deity yoga—A potent technology in the process of awakening to one's true nature that involves focusing on deities. The purpose of deity yoga in Vajrayana Buddhism is to realize that the deity and its enlightened qualities do not lie outside of the self, but are in fact innate to one's true nature. The ultimate aim of deity yoga is thus to

dissolve the apparent separation between the deity and oneself as a skillful means in recognizing both identities to be one and the same.

[B2] Deity yoga can facilitate the discovery of one's true nature as a Buddha so as to experience oneness with everything and compassion and love towards all beings. The deity is an essential expression of one's true nature and union with the deity can provide a skillful means to awaken to the highest level of inner guidance, which is pure consciousness. One can recognize or develop a connection with a personal deity through a spontaneous feeling of affinity, by receiving an empowerment initiation and making a commitment to practice deity yoga, or in consultation with one's guru. Some can misunderstand and misuse deities as "mailmen" of guidance, as there is a potential for deity practice to reinforce dualism, delusion, and attachment to concepts, forms, ideas, or fantasies in Westerners not possessed of the aptitude to use them appropriately. [S/B] An empowerment for the Medicine Buddha helped me to personally utilize new organizational frameworks and developmental capacities for healing. One should express appreciation for the wrathful deities who help one to surrender to the destructive powers of transformation. [D/B] Acknowledgment and supplication to the deities and awakened beings of all traditions empowers one's guidance.

[B2] "In the shamanic language they might call in the deities, the inborn deities, or the ancestor deities who also will guide you...It is true that in shamanic tradition in Tibet the deity's function is more like guiding you on the right passage in the mundane world. I think one thing the deity is not so much for in the Vajrayana is...about finding all the right directions in the mundane world. But it's more like discovering your true nature as the sublime Buddha... It is true that often in Vajrayana Buddhist tradition many of the practitioners tend to worship those spiritual entities, devas, dakinis and dharmapalas to find answers, to find inner guidance...the purpose of the deity yoga in the Vajrayana is to realize that the deity is not outside...to dissolve the duality between deity and oneself...The deity is none other than your true nature...Through deity yoga I felt that I have a little bit understanding of oneness. Oneness with everything...God resides within yourself, the deity lies within yourself. Vajrayana actually uses this notion of deities as not separate from yourself, but dissolving that separation as a skillful means...I have amazing, very enlightening experience with the deity yoga. I always regard the deity, the notion of deity,

is like technology...it depends on how you use it. I see that some people are actually awakening and benefiting from practicing those deity yoga from the east, like the sadhanas from the Vajrayana tradition or maybe even the Hindu tradition. And I see that some people are getting even more deluded and more dualistic, and actually more attached to the concepts, forms, ideas than ever from practicing the deity yoga. So it really depends on the individual and their spiritual aptitude. But in general, personally I'm very cautious about Westerners just plunging into those esoteric practices from the east without really thinking twice, or without making sure that it is appropriate practice." [D] "The Buddhist will see *this*. I go into bardo I will *not* see the Buddhist deities. I *went* into their bardo, I saw their deities. But *my* bardos, I don't know those guides, you know. I don't know Avalokiteshvara or Buddha, they are strange people to me. But when I go into my bardo I will see either Christ or the Imam and Mohammed and Fatima, and Gabriel. These are the guys I hang around with, you know?"

Entheogens—The use of plant medicines and other mind-altering substances, variously called psychedelics, psychoactive drugs, or ritual sacraments, in service of psychological and spiritual development.

[D/B] Psychedelic experiences with spiritual aspirations had a profound early influence on my life. [S/B] Psychedelics at a young age changed my view of the world, helping me to awaken from false identity structures. [S] The main message I received from psychedelics was to not try to figure out experiences, but just to be them and do them.

[S] "And the nice thing about entheogens and especially entheogens in the right context, is that they really allow us to get the whole enchilada...So when drinking ayahuasca or taking any entheogen, look to simplify. And what you come down to, the Beatles were right. All you need is love...we have a lot more sense than we think we have and that we can communicate with...those plants over there, you know, each one of them has an intelligence in it. It's not just that they're giving us oxygen and taking our carbon dioxide. I mean there's big, big energy coming out of them. And then it's like, how do we tune into that? They're tuned into us, we don't feel it. With ayahuasca I really got to see it. I mean, the ayahuasca has just been a Godsend about how accurate these natives were in Australia and how we humans have been given the task of taking unity consciousness or God consciousness to another level."

Provisional action—Tentative commitment to a course of action as a means of eliciting additional guidance about a decision. Provisional action has the potential to activate guidance. Experiences of daily life are perceived as real-time feedback and litmus tests in ascertaining whether one's perceived guidance is in fact useful and relevant to one's growth.

[S] I often use an ad hoc approach to development because of personal resistance to imposed forms of practice. I tend to make use of a trial and error strategy of committing to a course of action in anticipation of feedback from daily experience along the way.

[S] "There's sometimes, you can't wait, you've got to do something. It's necessary that something happen, but I don't know, there's no guidance. It's just the right thing or the wrong thing and so, sometimes I'll start doing something one way and by doing that, that's the signal. The 'No, no, no, no,' and the choices come in and it's like, 'We're going over here'...I've learned that I can agonize, I can second-guess myself to bits, you know. So what I do is I'll wait and I'll say, 'Well OK, where are we going with this one?' Nothing's coming and then I get an idea and it's like, I don't know whether that feels right or not, but let's start in that direction and see how that feels...but while in doing that kind of listening, like, 'Oh...'"

Receptive activities.

These conducive actions for guidance include uncontrived practices that are unmotivated, allowing, and communing, including non-action, or the cessation of a particular action.

Objective observing and Love of the truth—The act of unobtrusively paying attention, listening, or witnessing one's unfolding experience, grounded in a stance of equanimity that encourages a lack of expectation, suspension of judgment, and acceptance of and nonattachment to the outcomes of one's actions. This often involves the need to honor the truth

of one's highest needs over the comfort of gratifying one's baser wants.

This stance encourages the prizing of truth above all else. Although difficult to do, aligning with the truth of a situation regardless of circumstances is the fruition of one's highest human potential.

[B1] It is important to practice meditation without expectation so as to see things as they really are. [D/B] Objectivity, openness, suspension of ego preference, and the willingness to look and inquire into the unknown are critical to receiving authentic guidance. [D] Guidance is objectivity. By observing where one is stuck and unraveling one's unique conditioning, guidance transmutes the inner objects of the essential domains. Guidance responds not to what one wants, but to what one needs. One can authenticate guidance by first checking if one is consumed by thoughts and enthusiasms and then coming back to sensing one's body, especially the arms and legs, relaxing, and disengaging from one's enthusiasms by listening attentively and objectively to what wants to be revealed. [S/B] The recognition of interplay of form and formlessness lends confidence to one's stability of awareness.

[D/B] "I think when you start really opening and looking objectively you can feel where there's ego stuff holding...And sometimes that takes a long time...I think that the more we learn to be objective with ourselves, then, and let go of preferences, we get better and better at it. Because then we can taste or smell, sort of, the ego's preference, you know. And we also get to know our own ego better and know what our ego wants."; [D] "Guidance, as far as I have seen and know, does not respond to what we want. It responds to what we need. Big difference. And always if we take the principle that guidance responds to need and not to want, then little by little I begin to tune up my mind to ask myself, to inquire, what do I need? Versus what do I want. What is my wishful thinking and what are the needs I really need in my life for my evolution? Or I am beginning to question and decipher my needs versus my wants and wishes. And that's a lot, inquiry takes time. Because sometimes they seem to be so close, so confusing, then the more I come to know my needs, I come to hit my resistances, my deficiencies, my fears, then I know I am on the right track...And the Diamond Guidance, or the guidance holding my hand, saying, 'No, you go this way.' And I say, 'No, I want to go that way.' So it's a process of inquiry of changing our paradigm, of challenging our

comfort zone. And a process of also, a challenging process of developing trust. That maybe there's something in me knows better than what I think I know."

Opening to and accepting not knowing—The experience of being receptive to and realizing new states and possibilities of being. This involves a willingness to let go of personal agendas in order to relax egoic control, put our trust into the hands of Being, and surrender to guidance. The perceived need to maintain control of one's experience belies a lack of faith in the supportive nature and function of guidance, while the compulsion to control one's changing circumstances constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to wisdom. Whereas fear and resistance to not knowing often leads to confusion or despair, the actual experience of not knowing is ultimately supportive. One can only let go of personal preferences and wait patiently for one's unique path to reveal itself a step at a time, without judgment or criticism. Surrendering is ultimately revealed as paradoxical, as one lets go of control while simultaneously becoming one with the creative nature of arising experience.

[S/B] One needs to accept and defer to guidance, letting go of both fear and identity in the process of surrendering to and navigating the emergent terrain. [S] I seek to maintain an openness to both receiving and giving energy to establish an energetic reciprocity with the universe, while letting go of attachment to form. [D/B] Looking into and being Open to the unknown is essential to receiving guidance. Continual opening to one's Point of Light, Beloved, Higher Self, or Individual Clear Light Consciousness that is always inseparable from us, knows what is ultimately happening, and is guiding us, involves an ongoing experience of opening and openness to awakened beings through praying for blessing, transmission, and guidance. Opening, allowing, and suspending judgment reveals the ultimate significance of even seemingly nonsensical or irrelevant content. Opening to that which is beyond ego will receive guidance from beyond ego. Letting go of one's ego is ultimately in

service of its dismantlement. [D] Releasing to and cooperating with the force of guidance is often difficult. It involves the willingness to turn towards the truth in openness, dropping one's egoic position and opening to what is revealing itself in the moment. Developing trust in not knowing is essential. [J2] Letting go of one's ego to allow for objective guidance is absolutely critical.

[S/B] "you have to accept it and do with it whatever it tells you to do. So you have to let go and accept it. No questions about it. No organization about it. Know that it is the rightful path for you."; [D] "So I need to venture into not knowing and to trust that. If I'm going to the unknown then it will be revealed to me. So I tolerate the disintegration and the fear of staying in the dark. Saying, 'Yes, this is what I know, but maybe it's not enough, because what I know has not solved my problem.' Can I see what I know and slowly set it on the side and tolerate staying in the dark and say, 'I don't know. What shall I do?' So that's where I disengage from my habitual tendencies, from my conditioning, and allow room for emptiness, for not knowing, so the guidance can shower me with knowing. As long as I am running on my habitual wheels of knowing and action, I will not meet the guidance or interfere with it if I get it. So that is a process of how to go about receiving the guidance."

Rest—Relaxation that allows for the integration of one's experiences and efforts. Such periodic repose is essential to staying attuned to sources of guidance.

[B1] The experience of rest and relief itself is meditation. [S] Relaxation is an essential ingredient in attuning to one's guidance. [D] Allowing silence and not knowing helps the ego relax.

[B1] "You feel the whole presence of guru, and guru's mind and your mind become inseparable. And then you rest. Then it clears away all the...Just like, you have a deep breath, sigh. It's just like a huge relief...When mind opens you rest, being with the nature of guru. Then the true blessing."

Conducive states of being.

These embodied states of being, distinct from actions, facilitate the manifestation of guidance.

Trust and Confidence—A feeling of embodied faith and conviction in one's ability to receive guidance and act upon it, as well as feeling at home in the moment, as if one is always in the right place at the right time. To become receptive to guidance, one must intuitively affirm its existence even if one has not yet experienced it; some things must be believed to be seen. Although there are many doors to guidance, trusting in its reality implies the decision to have faith in both one's own guidance and guidance from others, each essential to deepening the guidance experience. Such an indispensable trust, providing an invitation to deepen one's experiential investigation with an optimistic 'fake it 'til you make it' attitudinal stance, may be cultivated with a guru, analyst, mentor, or friend, and may be instantly experienced with another or cultivated over time.

[B2] Realizing inner guidance means realizing the ultimate guru and highest level of guidance, which lies within oneself and is the inner wisdom of our true nature, a recognition that one can trust and take refuge in. A useful method of tapping into guidance is to remind ourselves to trust in ourselves, even imagining oneself as a deity reciting mantras of "trust in yourself" and letting go of the fear of making mistakes, which themselves can be viewed as necessary feedback for continued learning and transformation. Inner guidance has a quality of confidence and fearlessness, transcending fear of the unknown and worry about success or failure. One's conviction deepens the awareness of the inseparability of one's own being with Buddha, dispelling doubt and developing confidence that all experience is a manifestation of Buddha. [S/B] Confidence in practice is strengthened due to its proof of efficacy as reflected by feedback from mundane realm experience. Fearlessness is a central quality of guidance. [D/B] A trusting attitude can derive from positive karmic connections. It is essential to trust the guidance process to reveal itself and then to follow through with its message, meaning, import, or injunction. One can invite and trust Being to awaken one's receptivity to guidance, which is synonymous with opening to one's

Diamond Guidance. [D] Enhanced trust in guidance strengthens inner capacities of perception, discernment, and courage to honor potential conflicts between one's personal guidance and that of one's teachers. One can acknowledge the differing perspective of one's teacher without surrendering one's own truth, which is a personally destructive act. The grace of the guidance reveals a panoramic view of all the elements of mind, feelings, and sensations to reveal themselves, making visible the aggregate symphonic totality of the inner and the external so as to make decision-making clearer and easier.

[D/B] "I was on a cliff and was I going to stay with my conditioning or jump off the cliff into the void?...But I knew Rinpoche was in the void. Like I knew he was in the absolute. So in a sense it was like jumping off this cliff, which was psychologically extremely stressful. But I also totally had this unshakable trust in him. So, I did. And it was so powerful my body actually went into paralysis for like five hours after that."; [B2] "I think true inner guidance is that you trust yourself. No matter whatever you do you must trust yourself. And sometimes we don't trust ourselves, and therefore we go out in search of our guidance...when we trust in ourselves, I think there's a way in which we're always guided by the authentic, the true inner guidance...And I feel that somehow, not only that I am making the right decision, but I feel that I'm very confident and without so much regret at the result. Because there's no mistake in the ultimate sense when we trust in ourselves."

Spaciousness—An openness and receptivity to arising experience, which encourages a lack of conceptual confinement and increased options for responding to circumstances. In contrast to being dominated by patterns of thinking, it is possible to learn to pay greater attention to one's experience in an increasingly open way. Much of the work during the early stages of cultivating guidance involves allowing space around one's mental processes in order to deconstruct the solidity of and identification with thought patterns.

[B1] Lack of space confines the mind to fixation upon externalities, encouraging categorization of experience and partiality. Meanwhile, an experience of openness allows for

not knowing. This experience of space, the formless miracle of manifestation, naturally dispels doubt and frees guidance to arise. [S/B] It is important to make space in one's awareness for the plant goddesses to move in. [D] Disengaging from habitual tendencies and conditioning to tolerate disintegration and fear and darkness help allow room for an experience of emptiness in which the knowing of guidance can arise. [J1] One of the main current teachings from my spirit ally is to be less breathless and more spacious.

[B1] "And there is an openness, there is a space, whatever comes, as a practice. As an awakening...Regarding guidance, you know, it's like this whole thing is a process. Spiritual process. If you have the space there's things to grow. If you don't have the space you're very confined in one particular idea and that particular idea mostly about external things, you know."

Gratitude and Humility—A feeling of humble and reverent appreciation and thankfulness for the blessings and support of guidance.

[D] I learned to tolerate and accept the humanness of myself and others, gradually dropping the pride of my spiritual superego. [S] I recognize, accept, and appreciate fear in order to maintain humility. Gratitude and appreciation are portals of and to guidance.

[B2] "I have so much gratitude to my teacher...because he showed me my Buddha nature...And I am always thankful to the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni, of course, first of all. And also I'm thankful to the Vajrayana, because Vajrayana Buddhism is the vehicle through which I received the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni...And it's good to have a sense of [pause] reverence. Not only to the dharma teachers, but also reverence to everything...And also teachers also show the same reverence to the student as the student shows the reverence to the teacher. So all are showing a mutual expression of reverence...[which] helps us to instill the enlightened view in our consciousness."

Love and Compassion—A quality of purely unselfish concern for others' well-being, which asks nothing in return. Guidance encourages the cultivation of compassion and is itself experienced as benevolence and kindness from and toward others.

[B1] Guidance culminates in compassion for all beings, as ubiquitous and indiscriminate as the sun's rays. [B2] The eternal awareness of one's true nature is that of wisdom and love, in contrast to the transient nature of conditioned experience. [S] Compassion for oneself and one's guides is central to remaining open to guidance. [D] Love brings one home to oneself, whereas fear makes one lost. Because I had been hurt so much, guidance came to me in childhood as a feeling of compassion and benevolence, two major aggregates of guidance that can manifest as a green emanation, healing one's wounds.

[S] "And it's like, let people experience how much we're fed and how much we're loved...Compassion's been one of the big ones...Compassion for myself, compassion for my guides...And what you come down to, the Beatles were right. All you need is love. And the love is like the reciprocity of energy. The reciprocity of positive energy and of saying no to fear...It's what we all want, and that's what's demanded of us. And love comes in lots of different ways, you know"; [D] When I am afraid I am lost, I am trying to grapple with self. When I am in myself I am love. There is nothing but, you know."

Inhibitory Actions and Embodiments for Guidance

These contextual factors, actions, and embodiments block or obscure access to guidance.

Doubt—Manifesting as insecurity, confusion, ambivalence, indecision, and hesitation. Doubt is communicated by many participants as the state of mind most discouraging of guidance.

[B1] Unless one understands the nature of doubt as self-created, doubts will continue to come one after another for one's whole life. [B2] It is important to recognize when there is a lack of trust so as to awaken the realization of one's undue emphasis upon external phenomena. If one lets go of all fear and doubt, one comes to recognize that one's true nature is a supreme Buddha, the very source of inner guidance.

[B1] "Down from the very beginning we have that insecurity in ourselves. And that causes very major part in our inability

to truly have a trust...Because we are in this environment that creates a lot of doubt, you see...And for this, you know, it's really important to try to cast aside the doubt built up...[The impression of my root guru] completely cast out that doubt and now I feel really doubt-free...The deeper your conviction manifests, the stronger the impression manifests. And the more confidence it generates...That leads your mind awakening more strong conviction that Buddha is never separated from your being, your own guru. Then, you know, there is a conviction, whatever things come is a manifestation of Buddha. You have no doubt about that. Hesitation, doubt, all clears...Where the doubt lies. Is it inside or outside? In this body, outside the body? What form? And I cannot find anywhere...I don't have any doubt. So with that doubtless I rest."

Fear and Anxiety—The experience of dread or a basic lack of trust that manifests as insecurity, distress, rumination, expectation, doubt, lack of trust in oneself and others, resistance, shutting down, avoidance, and fearful motivation.

[B2] The desire for guidance is not genuine if motivated by the fear of making mistakes. [S/B] My search for inner guidance was motivated by my fear of the unknown. The consistent infallibility of my guidance for others led to both positive recognition from others and my own fear of insanity. [J1] My spirit ally used fear and respect as an effective initial strategy to capture my attention.

[S] "Any spiritual practice that I have or anything that I know, I can forget it if I get frightened...We get really clever and cunning when we get frightened and we get really stupid...And when I get frightened I can't hear anything, I can't feel anything."

Preference, Attachment, and Judgment—Having a preference or agenda for what guidance will reveal, as well as evaluating and judging what guidance unveils. Indirectly, this category includes willfulness, lack of spaciousness in mind, ignoring guidance, and sloth.

[B1] Expectation leads to distraction and rumination. Clinging and grasping leads to selfishness, an emphasis upon external phenomena, and a fixation upon form. [D]

Unlike relative consciousness, which is weak and attached to preference, the Diamond Body is free of attachment, always perceiving the truth and reality of each domain of consciousness. The Diamond Body deals with fixations both on the relative and the essential levels.

[D/B] “You need to let go of your ego, I feel, to have authentic guidance. So I completely let go of any preference of doing it or not doing it. No ego preference at all. Or wanting or not wanting any way or the other...So to me, to receive authentic guidance there has to be no ego preference. Otherwise it’s an ego thing...And again, in terms of guidance, I really, I think the only thing we can do is really open and get our preference out of the way, really try to be objective.”

Stage 2: Experiencing Guidance (Mid)

Manifestations of Guidance

This category includes the various ways in which guidance manifests and is experienced, resulting in an individual’s deepening of guidance.

Vehicles and modalities of guidance.

There are many ways in which guidance reveals itself, ranging from instantaneous perceptions to sequential manifestations occurring over time as processes.

Awareness and Clarity—Spontaneous realization, lucidity, or direct knowing experienced as the removal of obscurations or a subtle felt sense of awakened perspective. Guidance also manifests as recollections of present and past life experiences that serve to enhance awareness of one’s current life path.

[B2] Inner guidance most often manifests as awareness, which can then be translated into language. Inner guidance

is a wordless deep knowing that is fearless and determined, involving a clarity of knowing exactly what one is doing. [S] One must *be* in the knowingness of guidance, not looking for it. [D/B] When young, I experienced a strong spontaneous insight that the source of personal and collective aggression is internal, which in turn set the course for my life in a spiritual direction. Inner guidance is the luminous clarity of awareness itself. [D] I can detect the presence of the Diamond Body by its residual effects of clarity, lucidity, precision, simplicity, openness, spaciousness, and enhanced focus.

[B2] “There’s clarity. You know what you’re doing. Clarity. That’s what I will use, clarity. Like clear, everything’s clarity.” [D/B] “My own experience is that the clarity of awareness intensifies or clarifies over time. It’s like a little flame becomes a brighter flame, so the clarity of awareness develops...[Inner guidance] is the luminous clarity of awareness itself.”

Feeling and Sensation—A somatically based feeling or subtle awareness of distinctive energetic activity within the body. Whether experienced as an ineffable felt sense or tangible physical sensation, most subjects reported distinctly sensing an embodied presence of guidance.

[B1] One feels really different, moved, warm, and joyous after connecting with one’s true nature by connecting with one’s guru. [D/B] I can feel where there is ego stuff holding when opening and looking objectively at mine or others’ feelings and sensations. [D] The Diamond Body deciphers and refines sensations from gross personality and bodily sensations to refined essential sensations. [J1] I can feel the presence of my spirit ally as energy at the back of my head while drumming.

[S] “When somebody tells you something or when you learn something, does it feel OK? How does it feel? And most people... We’ve forgotten what it feels like in our bodies, we’ve forgotten the enjoyment of, oh, this feels really good... I tried to teach some people once and somebody tried to teach me about how do you know when it’s true, and you can’t know that unless you can feel your guts. It’s the bottom line.”; [J2] “The eagle, and the figure now, embodies the trusting heart. And I *feel* that. It’s more the *felt* experience as I’m in dialogue with the eagle... And the feeling is a deeper and deeper feeling.”

Thoughts and Internal voices—Guidance received in the form of messages and words, articulated conceptual understanding, and auditory vocalizations.

[S/B] Ironically, the unrelenting criticality of my egoic voice is invaluable in reminding me to attune to guidance. [S] Repeated experiences of hearing voices in my childhood were both comforting and disconcerting. [D/B] Inner guidance manifested during this interview as thoughts or words. [J2] My ally often provides explicit guidance through a voice.

[S/B] “So those differences occurred in voice manifestations when I was young, 6 or 7 or 8 years of age, and those voice manifestations told me that there were certain things that were going to happen in my life and that I had to follow a particular pathway to allow those things to happen. Now, I have no fucking idea how you discover that that voice is right or not except to view it along the path. And I have no idea as to whether that voice is coming from an outside source or an inside source or a quote ‘spiritual source,’ or your organic source, your brain itself...Or is it coming from an outside source or a plant or water, or anything like that...I just followed a pathway that was laid out and delineated for me. And this voice would tell me whether I was on it or I wasn’t on it...One particular voice, that I knew that was correct; somehow knew that it was correct...the experience was a voice coming up saying that I had to take a particular course in life that would have to go very rapidly, get me to certain particular place....So I followed that pathway and that was the correct pathway...it has an authority to it that there’s no argument to it...Different than any voice that I’d ever experienced before....And I don’t know how I developed the certainty or gained the certainty that that voice was correct, except in retrospect...it was a voice that didn’t have any identification. I couldn’t identify with it. And it was fearful at first. Especially this type of information. And difficult to interpret...It just came as a, like as a little speech. ‘[Says his first name], this is how it’s going to be, this is how it’s going to be, this is how it’s going to be...’ It was very interesting. And to know it was right at that time has always bothered me...‘Go here, go here, go here...Even though you don’t like this, do this’...when I went over the tractor 12 years ago, that same voice came on and showed me a whole series of pictures and ways of being and breathing and how to get off the tractor and how to

live...I was ready to let go, and Padmasambhava came on in bright colors and started directing me...My neurological signs came back.”

Signs and Synchronicities—Experiencing signs, symbols, and timely meanings in outward events as signposts of a meaningful unfolding process. This process may be perceived as reflecting a holographic mirroring of internal and external circumstances, in which the symbolic and physical dimensions of guidance unfold in recognized simultaneity. Signs and synchronicities are best utilized to deepen one’s questions rather than to serve as conclusive answers.

[D/B] The perceived synchronicity of unusual external signs in response to prayer can confirm the authenticity of guidance. [J2] I experienced many synchronicities in relationship to my analyst and my name change, both relating to trust.

[D/B] “I said to myself, ‘If I see three snakes I’ll know I’m supposed to do retreat.’ And within five minutes I saw two more snakes. [laughs] So I thought, ‘Well, OK, that’s it, you know.’...Three is a sacred number in Buddhism. And you know, the whole connection of the snake with Rinpoche. And so it was kind of like saying, ‘OK, if this is my guidance then show me three times so I’ll know, so I will know that this is the guidance.’...And so when that snake came that was so beautiful and so unusual, right in that moment when I was really praying for guidance, it was too unusual. That I hadn’t seen one and then right in that very moment when I was really praying, when I was just like really open and trying to receive, that came....So in the process itself I think if you just open and let things reveal, if you don’t judge it, if you don’t try to think, ‘Is this real or not real?’ you just go along with it, you know, and then see what, and you figure, well, it’s either real or metaphorical or whatever, you know, the symbology of what you see or feel or hear.”

Spirit allies—Transpersonal entities largely imperceptible to the five senses, including spirit guides and animals, angels, psychoid figures, and

ancestral souls. There seems to be a call and response quality to guidance that is particularly evident in dialogues and interactions with spirit allies.

[S] Several experiences in my youth of spiritual beings who provided me with protection from near-fatal accidents and repeated suicide attempts deepened my appreciation of the energetic field of loving support that is always available to all beings. Spirit guides are encouraging of one's healing by opening ones to the soul's energy, which always supports the best interests of oneself and others. [J1] The ally is a manifestation of the wisdom of the Self in the psychoid reality that assists in healing and as a portal to divine, often experienced as an energy in the body and the heart. Whereas a power animal is a general representative of a species summoned for particular functions and unable to initiate communication, an ally is a unique entity that is independent of one's control. Work with one's ally can range from daily spoken to weekly written dialogues and involves the practice of sustaining one's attention upon the ally's favored communicative channel. The initial tricksterish and didactic quality of my ally employed forceful directives to get my attention and assert her influence. [J2] The inner guide can be summoned for explicit guidance.

[J2] "The inner guide became a very trusted ally along the path. I think that's the best way to put it. And that's still evolving...It went from more of a bombastic, didactic presentation to more of a receptive...resonating presence....And over the years the eagle has transformed into more of a human image. It's not really a human, but it's assumed more of a human image. And I'm in dialogue with that figure almost every day...I'll report on a dream, or on the events of the previous day. And then the inner guide will come back with something and then I'll go on from there...Often, if you look at the transcript of one of our dialogues, I would say about 70 or 80 percent of it is coming from me...I feel after I've gone through this process with the inner guide...More ordered."

Inner guru—The only guidance one may eventually rely upon in full emanates from one's inner guide, which takes in all of one's various sources of guidance and settles upon the simple act that encompasses all of them. There should never be any antipathy between the guidance from one's inner and outer gurus, as both are manifestations of the same true

nature in different form. The experience of attunement with the guidance of one's inner guru is one of conviction, trust, and clarity, akin to the sun peering through the clouds.

[B1] The inner guru manifests in all forms. [D] One's inner guru is synonymous with the Diamond Guidance.

[B2] "You can find spiritual navigators or teachers or mentors who show you the right path, and who point out to you your essential nature as the exalted guru...So you have all these spiritual teachers and gurus in your life in order to be awakened to the state in which you are the inner guru and you can really find out what the truth is. As a matter of fact, you are the only one who is able to realize the truth and to actualize the meaning of your life."

Diamond Body and Diamond Guidance—The Diamond Body, the emissary of the Diamond Guidance, communicates guidance through the spontaneous revelation of naked, unobscured reality. The Diamond Body exists in varying gradations and realms. It manifests at the essential level of reality as an actual substance that is distinctly recognizable as guidance, while it is experienced according to one's capacity for interpretation as diverse emanations in the material realm. The more one opens to the objective nature of the Diamond Body, the more one can trust in its process of unfolding. The Diamond Body exhibits a precision and discernment of understanding, revealing where one is fixated and distorted in one's perceptions with compassion and without judgment. It can reveal such distortions in all of one's energetic centers, illuminating any blocks in its way. The Diamond Guidance ultimately reveals both one's soul's unique purpose, or "point of light," as well as one's true nature, thus guiding one into the depth of what exists on both a relative and absolute level of reality.

[D/B] The experience of Diamond Guidance is that of being guided by your actual Being, which will unwind, release, or untangle ego fixations.

[D] “So the Diamond Guidance will take the ego, which is like the inner child, the soul child, take its hands and say, ‘You know, my child, that’s the way’ ... We all have similar guidance. It’s a body like our human body, but made of diamonds and jewels. And that’s when I started to call it the ‘Diamond Body.’ I took the name from the Taoists, who were aiming to cultivate the Diamond Body, believing that you have to cultivate the chi energy that you are born in and cultivate it until your consciousness becomes so concrete, so solid, that it gels into Diamond, thus creating your inner guide, who’s the energy of the cosmic guide. In so doing, you will create and sustain for yourself the body of immortality. So instead of dissolving and dissipating in the energy of the cosmic field at the moment dying, you maintain a conscious entity of who you are, which will reincarnate or go to other realms. This Diamond Body was the pinnacle of consciousness, the ultimate and final representation on the relative realm; there were no other presentations when I tried to go beyond it.”

Dreams—Dreams often serve to initiate new awarenesses of guidance in the forms of guides, teachers, premonitions, archetypal images, and insights.

[J1] My spirit ally first arrived in a dream, in a medium primed for recognition given my personal Jungian sympathies. I had a dream before my cancer diagnosis that portended death and introduced me to my ally. [D/B] Dreams served as an initial manifestation of guidance in my childhood at the age of three, revealing two of my main future teachers in the Diamond schools. [J2] Four consecutive unexpected and novel dreams of an archetypal nature initiated my interest in Jungian analysis. Dream work provided me with continued inner guidance by revealing allies and evolving in content from personal concerns to archetypal understandings.

[J2] “I had these four dreams. They changed my life completely... Yes, the dreams play a very important role... They’ve served as the basis for important life decisions I’ve made. And sure, they inform decisions I’m making. I look for them, look to them, for guidance.”

Counsel—Supportive and occasionally didactic feedback from trusted others, both inner and outer, including spirit allies, teachers, and friends. This counsel can range from gentle and subtle support to bombastic and authoritative advice.

[B2] When feeling confused and lost, it can be helpful to seek the counsel of spiritual teachers, counselors, and friends. [D] At times guidance manifests as counsel and instruction.

[J1] “Rosie can be very particular. I mean, the time she told me I needed to go to the ashram 7 days and not to come back until I had. I mean, she has that level of bossiness about her.”

Skillful action—Skillful action and guided and knowing physical movements in service of healing and wisdom.

[S/B] I experience skillful guidance of physical movements without conscious awareness, consistently in service of healing. [S] I have repeatedly experienced guided embodied action in service of healing during critical and urgent situations.

[S/B] “So all of a sudden I realized, ‘My God. My hands, they’re working independently of me [while performing physical surgery].’ And then I began accepting that. Because that’s a hard one to accept. That these could work independently of my mind...I think it’s all easier to accept as it arises.”

All forms—The recognition of all experience as messengers and manifestations of guidance is the ultimate awakening to guidance, entailing a comprehension of the interdependent arising of all phenomena.

[B1] Guidance manifests in form. The highest guidance is the ultimate recognition of all manifestation of form or experience as a reflection of guidance from one’s inner guru. It is important to cast aside doubt to create a spacious attitude so as to recognize all form-bound experience as a manifestation of guidance in service of awakening one’s mind and strengthening one’s conviction. [D/B] There are varieties of manifestations of inner guidance, from dreams to

spontaneous insight to connecting with the mind of one's guru in response to prayer. Awakened activity may manifest in a variety of forms, including blessing, guidance, transmission, and removing obstacles. [D] All beings and circumstances ultimately become recognized as one's teachers of guidance, indistinguishable from the manifestation of one's guru.

[D] "So you can experience from one domain or another, depending on the evolution of the person. And depending what the person needs at the time, which the guidance will enable them. I can experience life from my belly center, then I'm about groundedness, about action, about efficiency, about stability, about all of those. Or I can experience life from the heart, from the aspect of beauty and art and visions. I can experience it from the head, from the level of understanding and conceptualizing and seeing the intricacies. I can experience it from essence, as richnesses, as densities. Or I can experience it as a totality. It depends on how the person is evolved and also what is needed. Sometimes I don't need to experience life from the totality, I need to experience certain aspects of life, and the guidance will help me develop this certain aspect. Then it will take the symphony of having all the aspects come together."

Developing awarenesses of guidance.

Progressive and enhanced understandings of guidance and prioritizations of experience that lead to more refined actions and embodiments of recognizing, attuning to, and aligning with guidance.

Increased availability—The gradual evolution from engaging in ad hoc or trial and error strategies of calling upon guidance to recognizing that guidance is always available when needed.

[D/B] There is a developmental aspect of alignment with inner guidance, progressing from an occasional flash to consistent access. [J1] Eventually one comes to experience the consistent availability of guidance. [D] It takes increasingly less time for me to align with guidance as I become increasingly familiar with it. This is especially true these days since I am continuously teaching others to align with their guidance. I continuously check upon guidance throughout the day, as I have done throughout this interview.

[J2] “As time goes, on, I’m more and more, I experience the felt presence of this inner guide. I’ll put it this way. In different spiritual traditions...the idea is that as you meditate longer you take the results of the meditation with you into your outer world. There’s a transference of results or however you want to think about it. I experience the same thing with the inner guide. It seems to be more insinuated into my life. It’s here. If I tune in a little bit I can experience the felt presence of the inner guide. That doesn’t mean we’re fused, it’s not that. But I know it’s available.”

Increased responsiveness—Guidance is only as effective as one’s responsiveness to it. Participants reported a movement over time from ignoring or postponing their acknowledgment of guidance to increasingly heeding it.

[J1] My ally’s insistent invitation demanded a response. [J2] Over time, I have become increasingly responsive to my guidance. [D/B] The more one comes to understand that guidance necessitates occasional suffering, the more one heeds its counsel even when it is painful to do so.

[B2] “now and then I used to ignore the message of inner guidance, or perhaps my habits and my propensities were not very much responding to the messages of inner guidance. Perhaps my inner guidance would tell me to stop watching TV, [laughs] whereas perhaps my conditioned self wants to watch TV, because perhaps a part of my conditioned self is addicted to watching TV.”

Change in relationship to suffering—Pain and disharmony can be utilized as direct portals to guidance once one begins to transition from a stance of avoiding discomfort to consciously familiarizing oneself with it.

[B1] Witnessing and reflecting upon suffering and its antidotes while growing up left a big impression upon me as the most important concern in this life. [D] Despair initiated the arrival of guidance in my life. [S/B] Circumstances of poverty, fear, desperation, confusion, and identity struggle surrounded the onset of an infallible guiding voice that I came to recognize was in service of selfless love and healing. [S] Suffering is an effective preparatory experience for

intense feeling states, which in turn sensitize one's receptivity to spirit allies.

[D] "So the ego is trying to avoid pain and go to pleasure and go to salvation. But the way it goes about it has not worked. The motivation is good, but it does not know how to go about it. So the Diamond Guidance will take the ego, which is like the inner child, the soul child, take its hands and say, 'You know, my child, that's the way.'"

Increased service and Healing—Guidance encourages increased altruism, motivating one to help others, while simultaneously improving one's own health and well-being. Along with experiencing a decreased emphasis upon what one wants, needs, or is seeking, one comes to increasingly prioritize addressing others' needs and concerns.

[S] Experiences of direct knowing in my life arose mainly in service and crises. [D] When you lose the connection to the altruistic part of your soul you become narcissistic. When you guide the narcissistic part back to Being, the narcissistic part heals and you become naturally altruistic. This is teaching the ego to align with the nature of the soul. [J1] Inner guidance is in service of healing, both my own and others'.

[D] "The guidance does not need anything from us. The guidance wants to take us home. It's our guardian angel...It's just absolutely, 100% altruistic."; [S] "And I think that there are a lot of people who are being helped by beings, spirits, whose work it is to help people heal, really heal. Not forget and keep going. But to really heal these great wounds that are being inflicted. And all that is this return to *dharma* that is happening."

Increased integrity and Responsibility—The importance of taking accountability for one's own actions, including ethical conduct and the responsibility for one's innate capacity for self-determination.

[B1] The strength or presence of one's inner guidance depends upon oneself. [S] One is ultimately either helping out life or is contributing to its problems, often unconsciously.

[B1] “As a matter of fact, you are the only one who is able to realize the truth and to actualize the meaning of your life.”;
[D/B] “Ultimately we’re responsible.”

Unitive experience—Development from engaging in dialectical communication with guiding sources of information to a nondual experience of guidance. A transition from seeking guidance to being guidance, where one begins to participate seamlessly in its effortless unfolding.

[B2] Inner guidance reveals a paradoxical language that implies duality, though it is ultimately indistinct from pure consciousness. [D] When guidance is present, one experiences oneself as flowing in the stream of a state of unity.

[B1] “the unity of Buddha with your own being [brings] joy, inexpressible joy. Not just that very, you know, external amazement and joy. But very vast, inexpressible joy. That leads your mind awakening more strong conviction that Buddha is never separated from your being, your own guru.”

Stage 3: Integrating Guidance (Post)

Authenticating Guidance

Methods of validating the legitimacy of guidance and discerning its genuine manifestations from false approximations so as to ensure its accuracy and reliability.

Qualities of true guidance.

Criteria of genuine guidance that affirm its authenticity.

Unwavering and Enduring—Guidance reveals steady qualities of stability, constancy, consistency, and an unchanging inspiration that can be discerned from the transient and erratic enthusiasms of the ego.

[B1] True guidance is not fickle and flickering, but is unchanging in its depth, vastness, and profundity. [S/B] The stability of either an insight or the arising of the mandala in one's awareness lends a veracity or authenticity to the experience. [S] The spiritual presence of one's teachers can be appealed to as a consistent source of great energy and wisdom. [J2] The experience of the presence of my spirit ally has been steadfast, always available to me throughout my many life changes.

[B2] "It's not like I have some thought today and then tomorrow the thought is gone. It's not like that this early morning I want to go for work, and later on I realize I'm not in the mood to go for work. It's not one of those transient thoughts or visions, but I had this very profound, almost inspiration that I should go to monastery and become a monk. I had that very strong, almost inner guidance, when I was very young, when I was a very young age, which kept just happening in my heart and mind, again, again, months and months, even years, which led me to go to the monastery...And that was my inner guidance. Because I listened to it. And it wasn't a thought. It wasn't some kind of instinctual desire. It was a very deep, profound longing, this guidance that was telling me that I should go to a monastery and to study the teaching of Buddha dharma, and to dedicate my life to the holy dharma. And I listened to that inner guidance, which changed my life. Completely."

Felt presence—Guidance is often accompanied by a resonant felt sense, or the subtle somatic experience of presence or Being.

[J1] I am aware of the presence of my ally in this room as we speak. [D] I experienced an evolution of my inner guidance from mystical in nature to a concrete and precise felt presence. [J2] I feel a real-time experience of inner guidance as a nonverbal and nonvisual felt presence that reflects my truest and deepest reality.

[J2] "It was the felt presence. Not verbal. And not even visual. But more of this felt presence. It's several feelings at different times. I mean, one feeling of...my heart opening more. One feeling of um...[long pause] deep comfort. It's along those lines. It's hard to put some of this into words because these are nonverbal experiences. And they're not visual, which is odd. They're mostly kinesthetic."

Joy and Comfort—Guidance inspires and culminates in both personal and collective happiness and benefit, giving rise to experiences of happiness and well-being that range from bliss and joy to comfort, contentment, and peacefulness. Such positive feelings are distinguishable from ego gratification in that there is no longer a deficiency around knowing or an efforting and yearning to know more. Authentic guidance involves feeling drawn toward that which gives a deep sense of pleasure, enjoyment, comfort, and levity, absent of any discomfort or pain. Guidance also encourages an appreciation of humor, play, and curiosity.

[B1] True guidance encourages no regret, no doubt, and enduring happiness, leaving one feeling different, moved, warm, joyous, and spacious. [B2] Inner guidance involves a tremendous sense of joy and bliss. True inner guidance is trusting oneself, which involves being content with ourselves. Inner guidance is always benevolent, inspiring self-empowerment, joy, confidence, and ecstatic bliss. [S] Blissful joy is a trait of authentic guidance. [D] Guidance shifted my assemblage point from the level of mind and desire, resulting in enhanced relief, peace, and understanding. [J2] Ongoing daily active imagination, dialogue, and dream analysis with my inner guide is motivated not by any feeling of obligation, but by the satisfaction of the experience.

[B1] “The unity, the unity of Buddha with your own being. There is joy, inexpressible joy. Not just that very, you know, external amazement and joy. But very vast, inexpressible joy.”

Attraction—Guidance emits an attractive force that one can learn to recognize and respond to. This intuitive attraction towards the source or content of guidance gives rise to a resonant feeling of affinity that is experienced as distinct from baser conditioned and instinctual desires.

[B2] An enduring attraction to monastic life inspired my decision to become a monk. [S/B] I recognize both inner and outer forms of guidance due to their force of attraction. [S]

Following one's attraction and what gives deep pleasure is one way to attune to one's guidance.

[S] "Where is my heart pulled? What catches my attention? What makes me smile?"

Powerful—Authentic guidance is recognizable by its distinct, original, unusual, and unexpected qualities of manifestation, often communicating a sense of importance and potency and inspiring a numinous experience of awe and reverence.

[B2] I had a vivid realization when young that there exists a powerful source of awareness that lies within everyone, which is both self-empowering and challenging to realize. I later came to recognize this source as my inner guidance [D/B] Seeing one's true nature has a power and fullness to the experience. [J1] My spirit ally often communicates to me through my body as a powerful energy. Much of my spirit ally's teaching emphasizes power *with* everything else in contrast to power over or under others.

[J1] "And the energy of true guidance comes through as a very deep feeling of 'ahhh.' [sighs] Something has just very powerfully happened to you. And my experience over the years with that has been able to trust that feeling."

Simplicity—Guidance has the quality of being simple in its messages and manifestations, both in its content and aesthetic qualities of presentation.

[J1] I discern the authenticity of guidance by both its aesthetic and feeling quality of simplicity. [S/B] When in doubt, I rely upon simplicity. [S] It is important when taking an entheogen to simplify all its teachings to love, which is essentially the reciprocity of energy, and saying no to fear. Simplicity is indicative of true guidance.

[J1] "So, the experience of a Self-experience, there's a kind of simplicity to it. And a, well, visually there's an aesthetic quality. I think of Self trays in the sand tray. They're often very simple. But absolutely gorgeous. And they express something that people may have worked for years to get to. And then all of a sudden this very complex interaction of

work expresses itself in this very simple, but profoundly felt, experience. And you can see it. You can also feel it.”

Strategies of verification.

Approaches used to distinguish genuine guidance from its close approximations or inauthentic manifestations.

Inner discernment—Using one’s different available internal resources to affirm the authenticity of guidance.

[D/B] A healthy skepticism to discern ego preference from objective guidance is important. [B] One needs to develop a capacity for discernment and interpretation of one’s guidance; independent discernment is especially critical if one is navigating one’s path without reliance upon a single teacher. One makes sense of the path along the way by using one’s mind to discern teachings and experiences. [S] Discernment of guidance can be seen as a combination of thinking and feeling, including sensing positive and negative energy. [J1] I discern the authenticity of guidance by trusting the feel of its energy in my body and the feeling of connection with my ally, other spirit beings, and people. [J2] I learned to trust in the authenticity of my inner guide over time through accumulated positive experiences over the long course of our relationship. [D] Discriminating wisdom is the same as the Diamond consciousness. The Diamond Body always goes into “and,” while the ego always goes into “either/or.”

[S] “Don’t take everything literally, you’ve got to flip it around, you’ve got to work with it....Feel it. Does it feel right in your gut? And does it think right?”

Consultation and Counsel—Engaging in dialogue with and soliciting feedback from trusted others in order to gather additional information helps to clarify one’s own guidance when recognizing apparent dissonance with teachers or traditions that one deems to be reliable. Conflict or tension with others who one believes to be in touch with their own authentic guidance is often a sign of incomplete knowledge or understanding. Guidance can also arise in the material realm as didactic

feedback from trusted others, including teachers and friends, and can range from bombastic and authoritative advice to gentle and subtle support.

[B2] Lack of trust in oneself may lead to searching for and consultation with unreliable outer sources of guidance. At the same time, consultation with one's dharma friends can reaffirm confidence in one's own inner guidance, that one can always make the right choice. [D] Conflicting information arising from different sources of guidance is due to either a lack of comprehension or information.

[J1] "And then I go in behind the waterfall to a large kind of cave room where Rosie is. And Rosie sits coiled...And I usually start, I have a book that I journal, that I keep these conversations in and I do it in writing. And I start with a question that I want to ask Rosie. And it has to do with what's next in my life and how can I handle something. Something that she would have some relationship to...So, I work with Rosie just briefly talking about the day, each day. But when I do the longer meditation she winds herself around my arm and we go out another opening in this cave into, basically the middle world, the shamanic middle world. And I write initially the question came through me, so the first response will be Rosie's...So it's a conversation that takes place over two, three, four pages. And then we stop and she stays there to sun herself for a little longer and comes back when she wants to. Or I bring her back to her location in the cave...One of the contributions that Jung made that's so powerful was to have direct access with unconscious material. And to continue to explore with whatever symbolic form that's taken. To explore that, and it opens up possibilities that are well beyond just interpreting what the symbols are in the dream. You can actually interact with those symbols, if you want to call them symbols. They're more than that. They're very alive for me."

Confirmation by experience—Receiving affirmative feedback on decision-making from the mundane realm of direct experience, including correlations between outward and inward events, inner voices, visions, premonitions, and intuition. A reliable way to authenticate guidance is to look for its byproducts of love, joy, peace, and patience in oneself and

others with whom one comes into contact. As guidance increasingly reveals itself, one develops an enhanced awareness of how to recognize it.

[S] One confirms the authenticity of guidance through correlating and supportive experiences. [S/B] I evaluate the legitimacy of guidance by its feeling of ringing true, its positive track record, and by viewing it along my path.

[D/B] "I think that's one thing that's led me to trust the seeing, is that there's been a lot of correlation. You know, like I've had correlation, not often, but in one very strong case I had a lot of inner seeing and guidance of doing some really deep work. And I ran it by one of the really high Rinpoches and he completely confirmed it. And it was all stuff that came out of my Diamond Logos work, so it was a whole different domain. I came across this very differently, and he just said, 'Yeah, you completely understand, you got the whole thing.' So that was a really big confirmation, because it had come in a totally different way and through my own processing work."

Differentiation and Integration—Differentiation involves unraveling, uncovering, or dismantling information to reveal its distinct components. Integration meanwhile involves assembling pieces of information over time, often facilitated by the accumulation of events.

[D] Guidance has two aspects: differentiation and integration.

[D] "In order for the absolute field to gel in different forms, different lenses are needed. One such lens is the principle of differentiation and integration, which is the principle of guidance. The Diamond Body exists and differentiates between the relative and the absolute. The absolute is a pure, luminous, clear presence, which differentiates that into articulation, manifestation, and myriads of realms of reality when we put the Diamond Body in it, like white light becoming a rainbow through a prism. It is articulated through the principle of knowing and understanding, just as there are other aspects of being that differentiate and articulate absolute awareness in physical or energetic forms. There are thus different lenses, systems, or essential structures which the absolute moves through and differentiates into different realities. It's all one, like water which transforms into steam, vapor, cloud, rain, ice, and

water again.”; [D/B] “I did somehow start to receive the guidance in little pieces...Little tiny pieces over years, yeah...pieces will start coming together that way. And it’s like doing inner research...you think about it and somehow the pieces fit together.”

Developmental Trends to Guidance

Patterns that emerge over time in relationship to one’s evolving relationship with guidance.

Changes in locus of identity.

A shift in the body’s assemblage point in which an individual locates their awareness, revealing different facets and resources of guidance.

Mind, Heart, and Belly—Guidance manifests in different energy centers. Guidance can manifest in (a) the mental realm of awareness, manifesting as cognitive processes, including thoughts and beliefs, spontaneous insights, and direct knowing; (b) in the affective realm of awareness, manifesting as emotional processes, including moods and feelings, intuitions, and resonant experience; and (c) in the somatic realm of awareness, manifesting as physical sensations and energetic awareness, including felt senses and skillful embodied action. The intellect seeks the throne of consciousness, ever struggling and yearning for more knowledge and control; when guidance relieves the intellect of that central seat of counsel, the intellect discovers its true purpose of communicating, but not generating, guided activity. Many subjects cite the middle ground of the heart as a fertile center for guidance to take root and blossom.

[D/B] Guidance manifests as a certainty in the heart that is not constructed. [D] Guidance from the heart soothes, heals, and guides others to love, forgive, and liberate themselves from the karmic cycle. One can use one's body as a barometer of one's openness or resistance to guidance. [J2] The evolution of my inner guide feels increasingly embodied; I experience an increasingly trusting heart and deep comfort and acceptance in my life due to my guidance. [S] There is a sense of harmony in the middle ground of the heart, which often guides my decision-making. Experiencing feelings and sensations fully, relaxing both body and mind, laughing, and focusing energy into the pelvis encourage inner guidance to enter one's being.

[D] "And I knew that my guidance, I can access it more from the heart. So I began to see where is my center and how can I receive the guidance. My mind, sometimes I trust or I don't trust my mind, wasn't developed and needed to develop things. My belly wasn't developed. So the guidance was not as vivid as when it came from the heart. So I learned in the beginning to listen to it more in my center of strength. And differentiate between my wishful feelings and my real feelings. Later on my head developed more and more so I can see and hear and know and decipher. Then my belly got more developed, I could know if it's real, the realness, solidity, assurance. So for each individual, they have a center of their body that is more active than the others."

Aggregate wisdom—Simultaneous awareness of the totality of information one receives from one's various energetic centers and a shift of identification from one's egoic processes to one's true nature, or from ego to Self. One may receive guidance through a single modality at a time or through several or all assemblage points at once.

[S] There can be a shift from distinct and singular attention paid to diverse psychosomatic sources of information, to simultaneous reliance upon the aggregate wisdom of the mind, heart, and body. [S/B] Guidance has manifested throughout my life as a voice, feeling, direct knowing, pictures, and slideshows. [D] The soul interacts with reality according to its station or level, depending upon the evolution of the individual and their needs at the time, whether they are related to specific aspects of the head, heart, or belly, or as a totality of experience simultaneously encompassing all of them. Guidance manifests as

benevolence in the pineal gland center, which is the center of soothing; as compassion, which is the heart that feels the inner woundings; and in the belly center, which has connectedness, embodiment, and holding in a physical way. The Diamond Body reveals and liberates fixations first in the mental realm, involving the complexity and intricacies; then the emotional plane, involving the passions; and then the belly, involving the body and instincts. The instruction, feeling, and action all happen with kindness. One's fixation type, personal preference, and stage of evolution inform whether to most effectively utilize guidance from one energy center at a time or increasingly together. While it is best in the beginning stages of cultivating guidance to focus on one quality, in the middle stages it's best to circulate several, and in the final stages of guidance there is no longer a need to choose, as the guidance will automatically manifest as needed.

[D] "for a mind person [guidance] manifests this way, for a heart person this way, for a belly person this way... The grace of the guidance is that it allows *all* the elements to reveal themselves to you, sorting out pros and cons and enabling you to have a panoramic view of what your mind, your feelings, your body sensations, and the totality of the inner and the external [contribute]... Instead of 'Either/Or,' [the guidance] said, 'And. It is this *and* this *and* this *and* this.'"

Changes in relationship to guidance.

Progressive developments in how one relates to forms of guidance with which one has already become familiar.

Evolution from state to trait—Also referred to as a shift from 'state to station', an experience of the progression of guidance from absent to intermittent to always available. This progression of guidance manifests in the development of such beneficial qualities as trust, confidence, compassion, and wisdom from transient and sporadic to consistently present. In the course of such development, one comes to prize a 'spiritual life' over spiritual experiences, in which existence itself becomes more imbued with that which supports spiritual unfolding as a whole as

opposed to intermittent spiritual experiences. Participants frequently reported initial stages of experiencing states of struggle and confusion followed by a gradual emergence of enhanced clarity and an ensuing fall back into a state of confusion. Eventually, the guidance process becomes more consistent, and the shifting back and forth from clarity to confusion diminishes. When guidance becomes more stationed (evidenced as a steady trait in lieu of a transient state), it is always accessible when needed, if not always manifest. Even when there is suffering or doubt, one's sense of guidance being readily available is not lost or diminished.

[B1] Guidance develops from being recognized in one particular station to all stations of one's experience. Even when suffering one does not experience the loss of guidance.
[D] When guidance is stable, it may not always be present in one's arising experience, but it is always accessible when needed.

[D/B] "In one sense you could say like I've had very strong guidance all my life. But those times when it happened when I was young it was just like a flash that came through. But in terms of *consistent* feeling about being aligned with guidance or a consistent ability to maybe receive guidance, I think that's developmental. In other words, the door might come open every once in a while, but to actually be able to open the door ourselves is I think developmental."

From familiar forms to all forms—A transition from an initial identification with a particular modality of guidance for ease of recognition to an eventual recognition of and relating to all forms as guidance. One may think for a while that one's initiatory doorway to guidance is the only available doorway; as a result, one may keep trying to go through that specific portal, becoming attached to it as one might with one's first love. Such a tendency can slow one down and bring

confusion for an extended duration before one refines and shifts one's understanding to realize that guidance manifests through many conduits.

[S] Ayahuasca and entheogens in general will at times attract images and spirits that are common to different people regardless of their culture. But overall, they tend to cater to the person's own symbolism and cosmology. [D] Part of the grace, compassion, and love of guidance is that it manifests in familiar forms in the beginning so as to be more easily recognized and related to. It is thus helpful early in the development of guidance to focus upon it in the energetic center of strength with which we are most familiar. In time, guidance helps us to evolve other centers for guidance. My own guidance initially manifested as comforting elders, followed by an opening and feeling of alignment in my heart.

[D] "And in the beginning, guidance would manifest as something that was close to me that I can relate to, something for me. And that's part of the grace, compassion, and love of guidance, that it will manifest to the individual in a way that is close to their heart and nature so they can relate to it."; [J1] "Rosie certainly appeared in a way that was hard for me to ignore. And I was primed already to be open to her form. I mean, I'm a Jungian. She came in a dream, it was perfect in that sense...[Now] I feel Rosie as a vibration in my back. I also feel her and see her as a kind of yellow light that fills the space...And occasionally, Rosie will call me in words..."

Increased correlation between inner and outer—Experiencing an increased confirmation of inner guidance by outer circumstances.

[B1] External experience is an initially useful stepping stone to guidance that one must ultimately let go of so as to encourage more options and space in one's awareness for qualities of guidance to stabilize. [B2] While in Tibetan culture the guru can be interpreted and utilized more shamanically as an outer guide, in the Vajrayana literature the guru refers to the ultimate and eternal guidance, which lies within oneself. [D/B] An enhanced trust in and correlation between inner seeing and process work, as well as outer modalities such as teachers and texts among different traditions, developed in my life over time. [S/B] A spirit ally can teach about the interplay between inner and outer domains of experience and provide instruction to work with outer teachers in order to strengthen the

connection with one's ally. Harmony between one's inner and outer guidance gradually develops over time. [D] Diamond Guidance reveals itself to be the wholly altruistic, infallible, and ultimate inner guru. Through inquiry, guidance reveals one's transference on the guru at that time or one's incapacity to see one's outer guru's guidance as complementary with the promptings of one's inner guru. [J1] Integrating mundane reality with imaginal work is a challenging enterprise.

[B2] "These days, when I want to consult with inner guidance...Perhaps that's not right, because consultation has the notion of duality between the questioner and then the answerer...I have been searching for good guidance from outer sources such as my dharma teachers, and my experience is not so much that they are telling me, like in the role of a PGS [personal guidance system], a spiritual PGS, [laughs] you know this device telling you where you should move your car, guided by satellite, a spiritual PGS telling me which direction I should take. But my experience is every time I consult with them I feel that I am empowered and I feel that I am capable of making the right decision."

From gross to subtle—Guidance comes in many forms and frequencies, from monumental to faint, progressing in one's experience through increasingly refined gradations. Certain challenging experiences, such as doubt or pain, may initially reveal only negative attributes, but unveil increasingly positive qualities as they are refined over time.

[D] The more one cultivates grace through refining the ego through meditation, prayer, formal inquiry, looking, examining being, and differentiating guidance from ego preference, the more intricate, deep and subtle the guidance becomes. Guidance is objectivity, precision, and grace, with gradations ranging from the mystical and mysterious to the concrete, direct, and precise. The Diamond Body differentiates the absolute awareness of luminous clear presence into gradations of manifest emanation perceived according to one's personality filter.

[D] "The guidance itself feels like utmost grace and the connection to it feels graceful. And when the ego cultivates the grace it cultivates refinement to be with a simpler frequency, so the connection becomes much easier. When the ego is gross, defended, and aggressive and hostile, there

is no refinement. Then the blockages to the structure are so dense the guidance cannot heal it. It takes a long time to filter through our armoring. So the more we refine, the more we do our homework, you know, meditate, pray, formal inquiry, look, examine being, keenness to differentiate, is this guidance, it's not guidance. How can I know that it's guidance? When we put our personal effort we get more refined. And the more we get more refined we receive more guidance and more intricacies and depth and subtleties."

From intrusive to receptive—The evolution of how spirit allies present themselves, reflecting a shift in tone from a stern, didactic, and commanding superego to a deferential, gentle, and reassuring conscience.

[J2] My inner guide evolved from animal to human and from shocking to familiar. This spirit ally evolved to become less vocal and more receptive and empathic in service of my individuation process. [D] I experience guidance as ultimately nondirective and non-moralistic.

[J2] "In the beginning, occasionally it [my spirit ally] would surprise me. [laughs] Or shock me. That never happens anymore. I don't know. It's a different sort of...it's a different sort of relationship...I've changed. It's changed. And our relationship has changed."

Diminishing of inhibiting conditions.

The increasing removal of resistances, blocks, or obscurations to guidance.

Obscuration—When obstructions to guidance are removed, purposeful action and fulfillment naturally arise. The false or conditioned self steps down from its usurped throne of personal identity and the essential Self takes its rightful place. Blocks to inner guidance can serve as guideposts for pressing psychological and spiritual material that needs to be addressed. Such blocks may manifest as psychological issues, challenges, obstacles, the 'dark night of soul,' or a rebound effect of periods of apparent regression following experiences of awakening.

[D/B] Lack of clarity is periodic. One may be unable to reach the right decision through the ego's resources due to the heaviness or urgency of a situation, at which point it is necessary to appeal to one's guidance for clarity and support. [B2] Most people can't hear the message of their inner guidance most of the time due to mental interference and commotion. Vulnerability and susceptibility to karma, ego, and fear—all manifestations of the false self—can be remedied by keeping an open heart so as to invite the influence of an egoless teacher. Losing all sense of guidance by falling back into darkness, fears, insecurity, and following the wrong information, relationships, and teachers can be helped by resting, meditating, and receiving guidance from trusted sources. [D] In order to dissipate and release obscurations so as to see the clear message of guidance, one must sense, feel, pray, and seek to perceive preferential biases, which are fears and blockages stemming from deeply entrenched object-relations. Encountering resistances, deficiencies, and fears are indications of being on the right track of guidance. Resistance manifests as distraction, shutting down, dullness, dramatic emoting, avoidances, distractions, entanglement, and tensions and aches in the head, heart, belly, arms, legs, and genitals. Both the rebound effect and dark night of soul experiences follow upon awakening experiences of guidance. When guidance is not available, one can only do one's best to accept one's vulnerability, reactivity, and despair, and to rest and seek refuge in teachings and friends, indulging in physical comforts when necessary. Whereas wisdom from the Diamond Body feels like oneness, freshness, light, depth, expansion, and precision, counsel from the ego or personality seems more amorphous, confused, ambivalent, and murky; it has less energetic vitality. [S] The lack of precision in New Age attempts to "language" the guidance experience can lead to the risk of confusing one's ego preferences for authentic guidance.

[D] "If guidance comes with the personality, then I have to see, is my personality affecting my guidance? Does it want to twist the arm of guidance to get what it wants, you know? So I keep staying with this, with the experience. Some confusion, some wishful thinking, some not knowing. And I stay with it and I keep sensing, feeling, praying, looking at what's stopping me from not seeing the situation clearly. The guidance is here, why do I not want to say, see it, or know it? Maybe because it might want to tell me things I don't want to know, I don't like. I want the answer to come this way, and it's telling me an answer I might not like. So I look at my prejudice, my preference, my bias. And little by

little, the more I sort out my obscurity, then I see the guidance there holding my hand, helping me dissipate the clouds. And then the clouds of my personality dissipate, and through that dissipation there is a process of learning why those clouds are there. Why have they risen. Why are they blocking the guidance...So I translate the obscurity to the object-relational field, into what happened to me in my childhood. And the guidance has helped me to see that what stands between me and my liberation is nothing but my childhood issues. So it has simplified what is between me and my Being. It's not anymore a philosophical system or religious system, it's something really simple, you know?...So the guidance helps me not only to see the obscurity, but also to see the message. And not only to see the message, but also to see the stumbling blocks on the way."

Doubt and Fear—While some participants reported being able to completely dispel doubt, all shared that their experience of doubt decreased over time. Guidance provides the increasing ability to distinguish between healthy doubt (in the form of discernment) and debilitating doubt (in the form of fear-bound hesitation).

[B1] One is likely to experience a lack of trust, instability, and repetitive problematic cycle of uncertainty and hesitation if one looks to one's ego for direction. [B2] As long as we have no fear, we always know what to do in each and every given moment.

[D] "Because sometimes they seem to be so close, so confusing, then the more I come to know my needs, I come to hit my resistances, my deficiencies, my fears, then I know I am on the right track. Because I am really seeing that I am escaping all the time. I'm on the run, right? And the Diamond Guidance, or the guidance holding my hand, saying, 'No, you go this way.' And I say, 'No, I want to go that way.' So it's a process of inquiry of changing our paradigm, of challenging our comfort zone."

Preference—The reduction of the perceived need for control over both inner and outer events, as well as diminished expectations of desired outcomes.

[D/B] One has no ultimate control over when one's guidance will manifest.

[D/B] "I don't think you can really have your ego involved if you're going to get clear guidance. Because there will always be preferences....I think in each of us we have to go through a really, like, powerful but subtle discernment process to discern any ego clinging or any ego preference. You know, kind of really step by step, to see where that preference is. So to me, to receive authentic guidance there has to be no ego preference. Otherwise it's an ego thing...In terms of guidance, I really, I think the only thing we can do is really open and get our preference out of the way, really try to be objective."

Ignoring guidance—Typically due to not liking what guidance has to offer, or preferring the short-term gratification of having the object of habituated craving over the long-term satisfaction of guidance. Over time, the choice to not follow one's guidance tends to decrease.

[B2] Ignoring our inner guidance prolongs our journey to awakening to our true nature, which is the ultimate purpose of our lives. [S] Not listening to one's guidance carries negative consequences.

[B2] "instead of me listening to and trusting my inner guidance, I tend to perhaps make decisions and act based upon my mental conditions and karmic propensities too...And some people are not strong enough to say no, to stand up and say no to the ego and take the side of the inner guidance."

Inauthentic Expressions of Guidance

False manifestations of guidance and their negative consequences.

Egoic conditioning—Identification with psychological content and habit patterns or karma rather than with guidance that emerges from a nonegoic source. One must be cautious not to mistake physical instincts, neuroses, and emotionality for nonegoic guidance.

[B1] It can be difficult to discern the subtleties of awakening wisdom from physical instincts and the enduring truths of reality from habit patterns that lead to insecurity and lack of trust in oneself. [B2] The experience of inner guidance always feels non-habitual, painless, and liberating. The battle between one's authentic inner guidance and the habitual tendencies of the ego can, however, entail both mistaking neuroses as guidance and lacking the strength or will power to respond to inner guidance even when it is correctly recognized. [D/B] Identification with one's ego obscures the clarity of awareness that is the source of true guidance. [D] The thinning of one's personality increasingly reveals the Diamond Body in its suchness as a structure of diamonds and lights constituted in one's image. [J1] The energy of guidance is indicative of whether it is false or true. False guidance does not ultimately make sense or feel right, having an energy that is in some way jarring.

[B2] "Sometimes our conditioned mind is like the downtown of New York...there's so much noise, you're no longer able to distinguish which noise belongs to which. It's just one big ocean of noise. In the same way our mind is like that too, so we're not really able to hear the message of the inner guidance most of the time. And therefore it's good to meditate and to be in the silence and completely let yourself reveal what the inner guidance is...If we just take a moment to go deep within each of us, I think we already know whether we are guided by our ego-conditioned mind or we are guided by wisdom...I believe that you're able to find the distinction between the inner guidance and also the noise of the ego's conditioned mind, which is run ultimately by impulses and compulsive behaviors."

Malevolence—Authentic guidance always serves the highest good of oneself and others; any other means or ends of apparent guidance is assuredly inauthentic or a corruption of the guidance principle.

[S] Spirits can be appealed to for malevolent purposes, which is not in service of one's highest truth.

[B2] "I believe inner guidance is always benevolent. It's never malevolent. Because it's coming from this divine source called Buddha nature."

Stage 4: Transcending Guidance (Post-Post)

Moving Beyond Guidance

Evolving beyond the need for or relevance of guidance. Some participants articulate the culmination of guidance as an embodied state of awareness that is no longer seeking to discern varieties of experience as more or less meaningful, authentic, or relevant to one's psychological and spiritual maturation. This state of enlightened perception, which may be interpreted as nondual consciousness, is described by several participants as an appreciation of one's shared identity with all things, as well as a way of living in which all internal and external conditions and manifestations are recognized as a simultaneous unfolding of awakened awareness. Having 'moved beyond' the relevance of dialectical manifestations of guidance, all of reality formation becomes perceived as a synchronistic occurrence, in which inner and outer experiences are no longer recognized as disparate phenomena.

Interconnectedness.

An embodied recognition that we are part of a larger whole and our unique individuation is indistinguishable from selflessness in service of universal awakening and evolution.

[D/B] One's unique Point of Light is both personal and transpersonal, networking oneself to all beings like a single computer to the Internet. [D] Any interaction with the Diamond level of consciousness will mirror and manifest capacities of Diamond Guidance. The Diamond Body is a cosmic guru/guide belonging to each of us, revealing that we are in the image of cosmos and the cosmos is in our image. [S/B] I discovered my ultimate identity as the center of the mandala, the source of all creation. [J1] The ally's teaching emphasizes connectivity with all life, and power *with* and not *over* everything else. [S] My guidance helped

me to understand that we already know everything and that sharing the soul's energy with the world is very important. It is critical to recognize and honor the reflective nature of reality by maintaining reciprocity and connection with it. It is also important to identify with one's allies as ultimately indistinct from our true nature as the sacred center of the universe in order to exchange and enhance energetic nourishment on behalf of ourselves and others.

[S] "By not feeling, by making a decision or being taught to not feel, that shuts down my antennae to this greater wisdom, this more connected wisdom, this having allies, you know...And we are defined by who we think we are and who other people think we are and also by this being part of all that is. It's the God part of us or something. And the allies are...they're who, they're part of who we are. They're not distinct from us, we're not distinct from them, we only think we're distinct...All the nature sounds and sensations are there to give us energy, I mean, and we can plug into it...it's about the interconnections."

Way of life.

A progression from relating to guidance for decision-making to experiencing it as a way of being in the world. While seeking guidance is often misunderstood as something akin to consulting a cosmic oracle, attuning to guidance becomes a way of life that lies beyond divination or choice-making, in which knowing and being one's guidance become ultimately indistinguishable. Living in accordance with one's guidance evolves into a practice of openness, spaciousness, awakening, and compassion that is free of expectation and craving, in which all manifestation reveals itself as the ultimate nature of reality showing itself; indeed, one is only in need of guidance until achieving this recognition. One comes to understand that guidance is not about arriving at a particular destination or making a correct decision, but about recognizing that one is always already at home and abiding in a state of perfection,

even though one may often forget or fail to realize this. Many may lack the capacity to realize this highest level of inner guidance, which is that one is already embodying the realization of perfect wisdom and that there is thus nothing to search for either outside or inside of oneself.

[D/B] The practice of self-liberation, which allows for direct seeing into the true nature of phenomenon, is complementary with inquiry into relative phenomena, which more thoroughly addresses particular ego obscurations. Inquiry, however, lacks relevance for beings who have realized a nondual and nonegoic level of awareness. [D] My inner guidance provided me with the recognition that absolute transcendent awareness is not enough; participation in immanence and manifestation is essential to human evolution, the pinnacle of creation that is the unique manifestation of the Godhead served by the Diamond Guidance. Guidance leads one full circle from the realization of transcendence to its actualization in imminent reality.

[B1] "This is not like making a decision or anything. It is like a way of living...Any kind of circumstances are awakening. Any kind of conditions are awakening."

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

“Know thyself” (The Delphic Oracle as cited in Hastings, 1991, p. 36).

What is Inner Guidance?

I initiated this study with a declared interest in *inner guidance*, a term communicating an assumption that messenger beings, vehicles, processes, states, capacities, frequencies, or realms exist in service of bridging the dualistic realm of “I”-centered egoic activity with a unitive state of consciousness, ultimately helping one to see through the illusion of personal separateness. Before collecting the data, I explicitly stipulated in the literature review that my definition of *inner guidance* would include neither the formless, nondual experience of the absolute realm itself, nor immanent phenomena of the terrestrial plane, including human teachers and material events. The term *inner guidance* was intended to include only phenomena occurring in the subtle and causal realms as defined by Smith and Wilber, each realm both transpersonal and dialectical in nature.

Here are paraphrased definitions of *inner guidance* by each of the participants:

[B1] Inner guidance is an innate human faculty which has the potential to awaken us to our essential nature, that of spacious and luminous clarity and indiscriminate compassion.

[B2] Inner guidance is an expression of the innate gift of primordial intelligence, which leads us to make the right decisions in our life and ultimately leads us to the great awakening of enlightenment.

[S/B] Inner guidance reveals one's rightful path towards increasingly letting go of false identity structures in order to fully realize one's true nature, which is an innate indivisibility with arising experience.

[S] Inner guidance is a resource of inner wisdom, supported by allies in many forms, that offers help in translating the energy and consciousness of love and reciprocity that is God into the earthly domain.

[D/B] Inner guidance is the luminous clarity of awareness itself.

[D] Inner guidance is the presence of the entity of the Diamond Body within oneself, a principle of the universe that manifests in all domains of experience and can be recognized as the voice of wisdom of one's soul or higher self.

[J1] Inner guidance is deepening the relationship with one's spirit allies in service of the healing of oneself and others.

[J2] Inner guidance is a reflection of one's truest and deepest reality, a trusted ally on the path of individuation.

Implicit or explicit in everyone's response to the original interview question of "What is inner guidance?" is an assumption of the existence of an always available benevolent force or source of guidance with the potential to awaken innate resources of ultimate wisdom and compassion that are in service of the highest interests of both the self and others. Participants often described inner guidance as a higher or deeper intrinsic intelligence that manifests in different forms and purposes according to its

immediate function. Such guidance does not rely upon subjective capacities, but maintains an independent reality and internal coherence unto itself.

According to the participant responses, inner guidance may manifest as a process, a quality of being, or a differentiated manifest form, all the while remaining oriented to psychological and spiritual development. It may arise as a dream, a disembodied voice, a visual and auditory spirit ally in animal or human form, a deity, a crystalline or diamond-like intelligence, or an open, spacious, and relaxed attitude of confidence and equanimity. Inner guidance may also feel like love in the heart, objective clarity in the mind, a felt sense of attunement in the body, an experience of synchronicity, or a wordless and spacious knowing devoid of concepts that accompanies spontaneous insights and realization of truth.

Redefining Guidance: From Inner to All

I used the phrase *inner guidance* in my interviews to discuss the phenomenon under investigation and received unanimously affirmative feedback on this word choice, insofar as the participants recognized and utilized the words themselves throughout the conversation. In the course of analyzing the interview transcripts, however, I began to notice that the modifier *inner* was conceptually limiting the emergent phenomena being described. Most of the interviewees shared that their experience of inner guidance was ultimately inseparable from their experience of both outer guidance and nondual realization. (Nondual realization here refers to a

unified consciousness and direct revelation in which one has transcended beliefs, symbols, and emissaries of guidance to discover an unmediated intimate relationship with one's true nature.)

I began to look at inner guidance phenomena as a subset of the more inclusive category of *psychospiritual guidance*, allowing for a multitude of philosophical and empirical positions on the ultimate source of guidance while still situating it within a transpersonal framework. The Introduction and Review sections remained largely unchanged following the data collection, providing an informative foil for divergence of content or emphasis in the primary research findings. As a notable exception to this approach, the term *inner guidance* was changed to *psychospiritual guidance* for the sake of continuity and readability.

I proceed here with the assumption that psychospiritual guidance, or simply *guidance*, includes and is endemic to all four realms available to human experience as outlined in the literature review and referred to as the manifest, subtle, causal, and ultimate levels. Almaas (2002) appears to support the inclusion of all realms of experience in this more expansive definition of guidance:

Various teachings have different formulations that suggest different ways to listen to or connect with guidance. In the Diamond Approach, guidance is connected to the comprehension of the messages and indications that are arising in all the levels and parts of our experience. Guidance doesn't appear only, or mostly, in the form of an angel or a wise old woman or man. It usually appears in the context of our normal everyday experience: in our relationships with our family and friends, in the state of our physical body, in our job situation, in what we feel and what emotional conflicts we are having. We want to be able to discern the guidance in all of these experiences so that our soul will unfold toward optimization. (p. 199)

Guidance can be seen to reveal a quality of redundancy, manifesting in a multiplicity of forms so as improve its chances of being recognized. As biologist Patrick Bateson observes (as cited in Pellegrini & Smith, 2005), “Developmental systems tend to be highly redundant...if an endpoint is not achieved by one route, it is achieved by another” (p. 14). As with natural selection, numerous solutions exist for any given impasse. Indeed, as one comes to appreciate the infinite ways in which guidance can reveal itself, all of experience is perceived as a means of awakening to the enlightened mandala of one’s true nature. Moacanin (1986) writes,

The alchemists believed that ‘the substance that harbors the divine secret is everywhere...even in the most loathsome filth.’ Tantric Buddhists similarly believe that every event and situation, good or evil, can become a vehicle of spiritual transformation. Nothing is to be rejected. And Jung’s psychology too welcomes every aspect of the psyche, rejects no part of it, and seeks it in the depth and the height, darkness and light, and in simple outer and inner events of every day life. (p. 66)

The term *inner guidance*, which as mentioned above became reframed as *psychospiritual guidance* following the interviews, connotes different meanings for the representatives of the various psychospiritual traditions. These differences may be interpreted in two ways. First, the participants may have been speaking of different depths, subtleties, or stages of the same phenomenon, akin to Ken Wilber’s metaphor of apparently unrelated realms of consciousness composing a unified spectrum of light (Wilber, 1977). A precise examination of such varying levels of realization are beyond the scope of this study, but the differences may be due either to innate capacities of different individuals, their ability to realize the depth of their tradition’s teachings, or the scope or efficacy

of the teachings themselves. Diverse traditions may offer not only different approaches to cultivating human capacities, but altogether different capacities as well. Secondly, individuals may in fact be referring to dissimilar experiential phenomena, all of which share in a vague or overarching meaning of *inner guidance*, but in fact represent qualitatively distinct experiences.

Summary and Interpretation of Results

Having reviewed in detail in the Results section the emergent themes in isolation, I present them here in the context of a composite narrative, highlighting the common aspects of guidance for most or all of the interviewees. Later I will discuss these results in relation to the reviewed psychospiritual literature. The following material is representative of most, if not all, of the interview participants unless otherwise noted. I also emphasize the relative importance of these themes in the participants' lived experience, judging the significance of the thematic material by the amount of time dedicated to it in the interviews and the participants' explicit mention of its importance. No supporting quotations will be used in this initial summary so as to keep it concise; supporting evidence of the following content is contained in the Results section above.

For those interviewed in this study, guidance appeared to involve four stages: (a) preparing for guidance; (b) experiencing guidance; (c) integrating guidance; and (d) moving beyond guidance. This developmental sequence is only loosely linear, as each stage actually

influences the others throughout the deepening of the guidance process. For clarity of presentation, however, the phenomenon of guidance will be described as if belonging to distinct sequential stages of temporal development.

Stage 1: Preparing for Guidance (Pre)

The preparation stage takes into account the conditions, activities, and states of being that facilitate guidance, as well as inhibitory versions of each. All participants expressed the recognition, discovered from early childhood to young adulthood, of their capacity and life's purpose to awaken to new and profound dimensions of themselves, variously described as their true nature or higher self. Some participants credited natural faculties for inner seeing, hearing, and knowing capacities since childhood, while others cited a keen empathic sensitivity to the suffering of others throughout their lives.

Experiences of both suffering and grace played a significant role in activating guidance. Cultural conditions and family experiences were highly inconsistent among participants, ranging from stable and supportive to chaotic and alienating. Painful trials sometimes helped loosen or shatter illusory identity structures that were no longer relevant to the person's life's journey; alternatively, in some instances grace encouraged the ego to relax and release its need for control. Regardless of circumstance, most participants agreed that certain necessary internal and external conditions may have to meet with the proper timing in order for guidance to arise. Many participants cited the importance of patience as a

virtue in waiting for guidance to reveal itself; some also reported that it is occasionally helpful to take provisional or ad hoc action when in doubt of how to proceed with a life decision in order to receive elucidating feedback from guidance.

Everyone interviewed spent considerable time discussing influential mentors in their lives, including teachers, gurus, shamans, analysts, and other influential figures. They for the most part agreed that such figures played a large part in directing them to their own inherent guidance capacities, empowering this recognition through instruction, dialogue, inspiration, trust, and direct transmission. All considered relationships in general to be supportive of guidance, particularly in regard to dialogue and consultation with teachers and friends as a means of reaching greater clarity on an issue.

At a certain point in the participants' lives, each began to take on formal practices in varying degrees of disciplinary training under the instruction of a qualified teacher, helping them to cultivate guidance. These conducive practices varied from volitional to receptive, with volitional actions requiring stronger intention and assertive effort, and receptive ones involving greater openness and passive allowance. The volitional activities included intention, concentration, prayer, active imagination, dream work, inquiry, contemplation and reflection, psychedelics, altruistic action, healing others, and provisional action to ascertain more information about a situation. The receptive practices included objective observing and love of the truth, opening to and accepting not knowing, meditation, and relaxation.

There are also particular avocations to each tradition that its practitioners especially relied upon. The Buddhist practitioners made extensive use of the skillful means of meditation, prayer to awakened beings such as deities or their guru, and contemplation upon the nature of suffering and its antidotes. The shamanic practitioners relied largely upon psychedelic plant medicines, prayer to awakened beings and to the spirits of the plants, inquiry, and provisional action to induce or sustain guidance. The Diamond Logos practitioners made greatest use of inquiry, prayer to awakened beings and to the dynamic source of guidance itself, referred to as the Diamond Body, and meditation. Finally, the Jungian practitioners focused primarily upon active imagination and dream work to cultivate a relationship with guidance. Nearly all practitioners endorsed the importance of the three more receptive strategies of prioritizing not knowing over knowing, objective witnessing, and restful relaxation. All participants emphasized both prizing the love of the truth over the desire for comfort, and a willingness to abide in vulnerable states of not knowing as crucial factors in cultivating guidance.

Regarding states of being that are conducive for perceiving guidance, the interviewees emphasized the importance of trust and confidence, in both oneself and one's sources of guidance. Most also highlighted spaciousness of mind to allow for new possibilities of experience to arise, as well as the embodiment of compassion, love, gratitude, curiosity, and humility. Each subject meanwhile cited similar conditions, activities, or states as being inhibitory to guidance. These interfering conditions include doubt of oneself and one's guidance, fear of

making mistakes, a preference for or judgment about certain outcomes over others, and attachment to one's experience.

Stage 2: Experiencing Guidance (Mid)

It is noteworthy how each participant first came to experience guidance in their lives, followed by its initial period of stabilization. [B1] first experienced guidance as the support of a spiritually mature family and community, culminating in intensive retreat instruction from his root guru. [B2] encountered his guidance as a deep and prolonged childhood yearning to meditate in a monastery, leading to nearly two decades of living as a monk. [S] initially received guidance in early childhood through the nourishing loving energy of both spirits and family members, which found expression in adolescence as a directive inner voice. [S/B] first recognized guidance in his childhood in the form of an authoritative inner voice that delineated his pathway at critical decision-making junctures. [D/B] recalls having a dream at the age of two in which she became aware of her life's main purpose and met two of her future teachers, followed by ongoing childhood experiences of inner seeing and direct knowing. [D] cites the experience of compassion and counsel from elders as the harbinger of guidance in his life, ensued by the support of awakened spiritual beings. [J1] initially experienced guidance as a portentous dream of a snake attacking her heart the night before she was diagnosed with cancer, introducing her to her spirit ally and strengthening her healing capacities. [J2]'s guidance first appeared as a

potent initiatory dream introducing his soul animal and motivating him to change the course of his life's work from research to analytic practice, which in turn led to his discovery of his spirit ally.

The practitioners experienced different modes of guidance largely in accordance to the techniques they used to summon its arrival. The shamanic participants experienced guidance chiefly as instructive voices, direct knowing, synchronicity, and spirit allies. The Buddhists experienced guidance largely through the experience of clarity, the inner guru, and by recognizing all arising forms of manifestation as signifiers of guidance. The Diamond Logos practitioners experienced guidance primarily as clarity, thoughts, synchronicity, a crystalline energetic source of intelligence referred to as the Diamond Body, and visitations by awakened beings such as the angel Gabriel. The Jungians experienced guidance largely as a felt sense of direct knowing, the counsel and support of spirit allies and power animals, and dreams. All participants, however, described a somatic or feeling-tone aspect to their experience of guidance, ranging from physical sensation to an energetic felt sense.

The respondents all agreed that over time they have come to experience both an increased availability of guidance when needed, as well as an increased responsiveness to its feedback. Most also spoke of a change in relationship to pain from aversive to curious and objective, recognizing suffering as a portal to new understanding. Several described a growing acknowledgment of their own ultimate responsibility for awakening to truth and an increased sense of accountability for their actions.

Most participants reported that guidance is intrinsically altruistic; they spoke of healing and teaching others as forms of service that are strengthened by guidance. All of the participants except for the Jungians also spoke of the increasing accessibility of a nondual state of unitive consciousness as one's understanding of guidance deepens.

Stage 3: Integrating Guidance (Post)

Participants agreed that once guidance has been received, it is necessary to discern its validity. This authentication process involves ascertaining whether the guidance meets certain reliable experiential criteria. Most said that one such key criterion was whether or not they felt a pleasant intuitive attraction towards the source or content of the guidance, a resonance of affinity that is experienced as distinct from conditioned and instinctual desires. This attraction was characterized as unwavering and enduring, as opposed to the often flickering and fickle desires of the ego.

All concurred that guidance gives rise to a state of happiness and well-being, ranging from bliss and joy to comfort, contentment, and peacefulness. Guidance was also frequently experienced as having great potency and a feeling of numinosity, awe, or special significance, and often appeared to be unique in regard to its distinct, original, unusual, and unexpected qualities of manifestation. Many participants described guidance as having a quality of simplicity in both the content of its messages and its aesthetic qualities of manifestation; although its

components might be complex, its conveyance tends to be simple. For most interviewees, the appearance of guidance was also accompanied by a resonant felt sense of the presence of Being itself, the generative source from which all creation emanates.

In addition to recognizing certain essential qualities of guidance, descriptions included specific strategies for verifying these qualities when they are not immediately apparent. Most often these strategies for distinguishing genuine guidance from a close approximation or inauthentic manifestation involved a process of inner discernment that revealed an attitude of healthy skepticism and a weighing of information using all of one's available internal resources. All participants said that true guidance was confirmed by direct experience, including positive feedback from others and environmental confirmations of the messages delivered by inner voices, visions, premonitions, and intuition. Interpersonal feedback often emerged in consultation with others who provided both counsel and a receptive, supportive, and clarifying sounding board. The Diamond Logos and shamanic practitioners also spoke of guidance as a process that requires exercising discernment in regard to received information that often needs further "unpacking," in addition to integrating pieces of information over time from multiple modes of experience.

Several individuals experienced guidance as residing either simultaneously or sequentially in the mind, body, and heart. In addition to the composite wisdom inherent in these three energetic and physical centers, several practitioners gave special attention to the heart, the

middle realm of heaven and earth. These three wisdom nodes are symbiotic portals of healing and wholeness that can reveal information and release conditioning when focused upon with objective awareness. Several participants reported a progression from first recognizing guidance through the visual, auditory, and mental channels to eventually settling into a more embodied felt sense of its full, vital, and numinous presence.

All participants spoke of the changes in their relationship to psychospiritual guidance over time. Many said that guidance initially arose for them in its most easily recognizable or intuitive form, as if tailored for their unique capacities to apprehend it, before revealing its myriad dimensions and access points. All claimed that guidance also revealed itself in increasingly subtle gradations, from coarse to subtle. Most interviewees found an enhanced correlation over time between their inner and outer experience, revealed in a heightened sensitivity to synchronicity, a sharpening of intuition and dream acuity, and increased harmony between internal and external sources of information. Several also described an energetic shift in guidance from didactic and shocking, which initially grabbed their attention, to receptive and empathic once they had established a stable relationship with it. Finally, all participants reported an increasingly consistent availability of and responsiveness to guidance as their relationship with guidance matured.

Each subject spoke to several negative conditions that inhibit or interfere with guidance, including fear, doubt, preference, hubris, impatience, stubbornness around knowing, and deliberately ignoring

guidance due to laziness or competing interests. Resistance to guidance generally involves anything that causes contraction or reactivity in one's mind or body, including the general fear of letting go of control of one's identity; attachment to negative memories, moods, knowledge, or conceptual models; preferring the personal to the impersonal; and prioritizing the comfort of ignorance over the potentially painful awareness of past conditioning. Inquiry, meditation, opening, and relaxing allow the dynamism of guidance to flow directly into these knots of past conditioning. These impediments to guidance must be lessened or removed in order for the spontaneous capacity of guidance to flow freely through one's being.

Many participants also testified to near enemies of guidance, experiences that may be interpreted as authentic if not carefully examined. As a general rule of thumb, if one's actions are motivated by the conditioned drives of the ego or selfish and malevolent purposes, one is not experiencing authentic guidance in service of one's highest psychospiritual development.

Stage 4: Transcending Guidance (Post-Post)

Many interviewees expressed their view that guidance evolves from a decision-making helper to a way of seeing and being in the world in which receiving and embodying guidance become indistinguishable. This way of living, which is beyond a dualistic experience of guidance, implies a unitive state of consciousness in which perceptual boundaries of

self and other dissolve, and all inner and outer phenomena are recognized as interconnected and interdependently arising. Depending upon the participants' articulation of this experiential recognition, this way of participating in the world can either be interpreted as the most highly realized manifestation of guidance itself or a transcendence of the need for guidance.

Patterns and Idiosyncrasies Among the Traditions

This study compares psychospiritual traditions in order to emphasize their commonalities over their differences, as I presume these diverse traditions point towards similar, if not the same, ultimate truths. Indeed, this "both/and" as opposed to "either/or" perspective is itself considered by some of the study participants to be a quality of guidance. This being said, prominent differences between these four traditions and notable idiosyncrasies within them as reported by the participants warrant mention.

Both male shamanic practitioners said that the extensive suffering they experienced throughout childhood sensitized their empathic capacities. As children both also had the alarming experience of directive thoughts or voices as their first explicit messengers of guidance. These two individuals emphasized that guidance plays an important role in healing oneself and others, and that one must continually shed false identity constructions in order to increasingly discover one's true nature. The Buddhists, meanwhile, stressed the major role their own teachers played in their learning to trust themselves. They also shared an appreciation of

meditation, trust, and objectivity to reveal guidance, and cited indiscriminate compassion and nondual awareness as the ultimate expression of guidance.

Both Diamond Logos practitioners identified inquiry as their central practice of attuning to guidance, emphasized the benefit of allowing oneself “not to know” while trusting in guidance to support one’s highest purpose, and acknowledged their innate capacities of inner seeing as facilitating the guidance process for themselves and others. The Jungian analysts in turn pointed to powerful initiatory dreams in adulthood that redirected the course of their lives, while crediting their relationships with steadfast spirit allies cultivated through active imagination and dream work as their primary means of accessing guidance.

It is also noteworthy that the male Jungian participant had for his spirit ally an eagle that transformed into a male human figure, while the female Jungian analyst’s spirit ally assumed the form of a female snake. Both the bird and the snake have ancient associations, suggesting the evidence of emergent archetypal patterns in these reported experiences. The bird “for shamans is often a power animal and a symbol of spirit” (Walsh, 2007, p. 81), while the snake is a longstanding symbol of transformation, as reflected in the image of ouroboros, the tail-eating snake representing the cycle of life and death. According to Sandner (as cited in Sandner & Wong, 1997), “of all spirit animals the snake is one of the most common in shamanic mythologies and in the dreams and visions

of modern people...it is the primary animal link between shamanism and modern psychology" (pp. 7-8).

Certain phenomena featured prominently in my literature review, but not in the participant responses. For example, my theoretical investigation focused largely upon form-based messengers of guidance, such as shamanic familiars and Buddhist dakinis, while participants emphasized attitudes and states of being such as trust, openness, and objectivity. In general I found it of interest that many people did not make as extensive use of the languaging of their traditions as I had imagined they would in order to provide theoretical scaffolding for their unique experiences. For example, the shamanic practitioners did not explicitly refer to soul retrieval or psychopomp activities, nor the Jungians to the anima, symbols, or the ego-Self axis, nor the Buddhists to dakinis or kayas, nor the Diamond practitioners to an optimizing force. [J2] even speaks to the awkwardness of utilizing the jargon of his tradition, as if it might ring of cliché; in reference to his spirit ally, he says, "It was a wise eagle...It seemed to know things that pertained to, I hate to use this expression, my individuation process. It's almost hackneyed, for a Jungian analyst to use that term."

Both shamanic practitioners who used entheogens rarely discussed their phenomenological experiences working with ayahuasca or *Mimosa hostilis*; instead they focused on the consequences of such experiences or larger philosophical frameworks within which these plant medicines are situated in relation to guidance. They did not refer to the three worlds of traditional shamanic cosmology, nor to engaging in journeying or

psychopomp activities to guide or rescue other souls, endeavors which theoretically comprise the hallmarks of shamanism. This could be due to the fact that both participants are non-native shamanic practitioners, providing healing and guiding roles in a North-American context that does not incorporate such spatially conceptualized realms of navigation. Rather, each ayahuasca shaman described his view of reality in remarkably similar languaging. Both [S] and [S/B] detailed their experiences of the source of guidance in kaleidoscopic terms reminiscent of mandalas. For [S],

It's like there's this energy source that's like a collage and as I look in any direction there are figures that are identifiable... This field of, it feels a little like a geodesic dome, and it's quite fuzzy and it's kind of gold and yet it's robin's egg blue as well, this field, and it has patterns. [laughs] The patterns are...Blue, magenta and gold.

[S/B] meanwhile commented upon "that particular exposure, you know, that particular ornament, in Tibetan formats of ornaments. I love Christmas ornaments. You know, there's multi-rectangular ornaments shining, so they have multi-colored ornaments, you know. Mine go in tetrahedrons." According to [D], these descriptions are similar to those of the Diamond Body: "The more we thin our personality the more we're transparent, the more the guidance creates us in its suchness. Which is an incredible structure of diamonds and entities in your image and my image made of diamonds and lights."

It should also be noted that none of the participants spoke directly of the four planes of reality (gross, subtle, causal, and absolute) as articulated by the perennial philosophy.

Paradoxes of Guidance

Instantly apparent in the study findings is that psychospiritual guidance is as multifaceted an experiential phenomenon as is the theory about it. Although guidance has a developmental aspect that is charted in detail in the earlier Results section, it also has atemporal and multilevel aspects that resist linear analysis. In this study guidance was understood to function not only on many levels of consciousness simultaneously, but also as both an occurrence and a process, akin to a photon and a wave in quantum dynamics. In certain circumstances, guidance may manifest as a capacity for weighing different sources of information and immediately discerning one's highest possible truth in any situation. At other times it may emerge as a process, an adventure into the unknown where one must face one's deepest wounds. The very language used to discuss the relationship with guidance is indicative of its diverse nature, as participants spoke variously of opening to, attuning to, aligning with, recognizing, activating, utilizing, deepening, cultivating, and discovering guidance.

The participants' collective experience of guidance reveals a variety of prominent paradoxes, reflecting dynamic tensions and oscillations between experiential polarities. In the words of Jung (1968), "the paradox is one of our most valuable spiritual possessions...only the paradox comes anywhere near to comprehending the fullness of life. Non-ambiguity and non-contradiction are one-sided, and thus, not suited to express the incomprehensible" (p. 18). One approach to working with polarities is to explore a balanced stance between perceived extremes so as to draw from

each pole's wisdom. Many participants, for example, cited a middle-way approach to cultivating trust in guidance, distinguishing between cynicism and a naïveté of all-accepting blind trust. Between these extremes lies a possibility of healthy discernment and informed discrimination. Jung (1964) saw polarities as maintaining a healthy dynamism in service of transcendence:

The shuttling to and fro of arguments and affects represents the transcendent function of opposites. The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living, third thing—not a logical stillbirth...but a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation. The transcendent function manifests itself as a quality of conjoined opposites. (p. 189)

Raff (2000) elaborates upon Jung's theory of the transcendent function of opposites, affirming that,

The self is the union of opposites, as well as the center of the psyche. This center grows by organizing the archetypal forces around itself through the union of the ego and the unconscious. The transcendent function is the means by which these opposites become united, the process by which the manifest self is brought into being. Every time the ego contacts an image from the unconscious and engages it in meaningful dialogue, it can trigger the transcendent function. Every time it does so, no matter how small the issue involved may seem, it has strengthened and transformed the self. Out of the tension created by the opposing views of the ego and the unconscious, out of the shuttling between positions, a new, third and transcendent position is created...The great distance between these two opposites has been bridged, and the experience of the self now includes both. (pp. 22-23)

The optimal field for the arising of guidance appears to be striking a perfect balance between structure and dynamism, be it experienced as a companion guide in shamanic practice, a recognition of one's inner guru in the Vajrayana, one's spirit ally in the Jungian paradigm, or the

Diamond Body in the Diamond teachings. This balance may generate coherent and complex of states of mind so that unexpected emergent properties can arise in the electrical field of our neural networks (Siegel, 1999). According to Jungian analyst Jean Shinoda Bolen (1979), Jung understood the Self to reside in this middle ground:

Jung conceived of the Self as a midpoint related to both ego and unconscious, yet equivalent to neither; a source of energy that urges the person to “become what one is”; an archetype that provides a sense of order and meaning in the personality. (p. 49)

Although, as in Jung’s conception (1964), the psyche is a self-regulating phenomenon that is constantly redefining itself in relation to the ego-Self axis, guidance appears to also be a trans-dimensional dynamic or field structure that extends beyond the self-contained system of the individual psyche. The phenomenon of guidance can thus be seen to emerge as an intermediary principle activated between minds, each mind enhancing the shared complexity of the newly emergent resonant field. According to interpersonal neurobiologist Daniel Siegel (1999),

Systems achieve stability as they flow between these extremes in their movement toward maximal complexity...Within this optimal flow are connections of the processes both within a single mind and between minds. Integration involves the recruitment of internal and interpersonal processes into a mutually activating coregulation...defined as “resonance”...the property of interacting systems that defines the influence of each system’s activity on the other. (pp. 320-322)

Another approach to these paradoxes in relation to guidance is to treat them as one would Zen koans, assuming that in their very contemplation lies the invitation to relax one’s mind into a truth surmounting dualistic thinking. I have sought to hold these different

approaches in mind while interpreting the research data, trusting that a detailed exploration of the following paradoxes may be a singular way to reveal some complexities of a phenomenon that itself transcends the bounds of propositional logic. Focusing upon paradoxes may also help to illuminate subtle dynamics of guidance that are deserving of future research.

I will now present five prominent paradoxes regarding guidance that emerged in the course of this study. These paradoxes manifested as apparent contradictions of (a) grace and suffering; (b) dismantling and reconstruction; (c) tradition and creativity; (d) form and formlessness; and (e) inner and outer. These paradoxes are left standing as unanswered questions, in the faith that simply bringing attention to their existence is more faithful to their complex nature than drawing overly simplistic and premature conclusions about them.

Suffering and Grace

The ego does not trust the guidance, struggling with it, pushing it away, and losing faith in it, while the guidance again and again takes it to those unpleasant places in which those pains, wounds, confusions are the jewels that we are erroneously seeking with our wishful thinking. The guidance that is the nectar of healing exists within the very wounds themselves. [D]

Several participants said their search for guidance was motivated by a prolonged experience of dissatisfaction, disharmony, or unrest, impelling them to seek to restore in their lives a feeling of balance or peace. Indeed, "Much has been made of the idea that shamanism is born

of crisis and disease” (Drury, 1989, p. 7). Such dis-ease—whether it is a slow wearing away of the ego’s defenses through life’s daily grind or a psychological and physical crisis culminating in despair—may be interpreted as chinks in the armor of the ego’s capacity to feel that it is fully in control or competent to handle such emerging experiences. Palmer (1998) speaks to these various ways in which inner wisdom can develop:

Some are fortunate enough to be so gradually and gracefully introduced to the ways of inner knowing that they assume everyone operates from the same level of consciousness. Others...[are] knocked off their perceptual moorings by an apparently out-of-the-blue series of events that defy logic yet seem far more fundamental than sensory reality. A direct jolt of inner knowing is especially startling to people...whose confidence previously lay in intellectualism, because it urges us towards a way of life that we might never have rationally chosen. (p. xv-xvi)

Suffering appears by its conditioned nature to be unavoidable, as it is conditioning itself that guidance seeks to reveal and release. Jung certainly saw this to be so in both shamanic healing and in the individuation process, “in confirmation of the mythological truth that the wounded is the agent of healing, and that the sufferer takes away the suffering” (Sabini as cited in Sandner & Wong, 1997, p. 15). [S] similarly speaks to the value of suffering as a portal to well-being in its invitation to fully feel into one’s experience:

How is it in my gut? And when you’ve suffered a lot, especially as a kid, you don’t trust your own guts...When you eat, when you open up the refrigerator and open up a jar and you get a whiff of this rotten smell, your stomach goes “whoa!” and your whole body says no. And it’s that same kind of sense, OK. But we’ve, I think because we don’t know how to suffer, we don’t know how to feel deeply and deeply feel passionate.

Whereas some participants reported that isolation and suffering had served as the initial catalysts that drew their attention to guidance, others credited kindness and support. The participants' responses thus reveal that both pain and love have the same potential to initiate guidance processes in an individual. [J1], for example, relates that her spirit ally had intervened in her life in ways that seemed at varying times "miraculous or horrific." Egoic conditioning bows to both bliss and terror, and most participants described the critical influence of each upon the development of guidance in their lives. Raff (2000) affirms the possibility of both conflict and reconciliation as doorways to the divine:

It may seem that Jung suggested that one can only experience the transcendent function by entering into a conflict of some kind with the unconscious, but this is not the case. The shuttling back and forth of which he spoke can take other forms besides oppositional confrontation. There can be a joint elaboration of a topic, or the expression of fear and the reassuring response, or the request for further information. The possibilities are endless, but the nature of the interaction must be real enough to generate psychic tensions as the two positions are brought into contact. (pp. 23-24)

Many interviewees described an ongoing attitudinal shift in their lives from the avoidance to acceptance of painful experience. They increasingly turned towards the very sources of discomfort they had been resisting in order to understand the origins of their wounds and to attend to their needs in service of healing and wholeness. Although none reported enjoying such pain, anguish, and dysphoria, most shared that consciously experiencing and abiding in discomfort and despair can serve as a potent threshold to new ways of opening to arising experience.

Doubting, for example, comes to be more objectively acknowledged over time as an unavoidable part of the guidance process and does not retain the level of aversion it assumed in the beginning of one's experience. Almaas (as cited in Borysenko & Dveirin, 2007) states,

Emotional doubt is destructive to guidance. It's a hindrance because it closes the mind, closes the openness.
Philosophical doubt is questioning—an inquiring attitude: *I don't know if this is true or not, but I want to find out. Right?* That's definitely a help, because it means you're moving toward not knowing. (pp. 61-62)

In general, the participants shared that the willingness to relate to our aversions and their sources with curiosity, objectivity, and appreciation helps us to become free of their dominion.

Dismantling and Reconstruction

So then you just invite [guidance], you know, trusting that the divine intelligence of Being will reveal what needs to be unwound at that particular moment. I mean, it's really different if people have done a lot of spiritual practice. It starts going really, really fast. Especially if you've already done a lot of practice about letting go of your ego, you know, and a lot of ego dismantling. [D/B]

Suffering as a gateway to psychospiritual maturation is in alignment with the aforementioned initiatory crisis often accompanying shamanic training, which can serve as a “psychological deconstruction” and “growth experience” involving a “restructuring process of the ego” and “the holistic imperative toward psychointegration” (Winkelman, 2002, pp. 81-83). Repeated deconstructing, paired with new patterns of experience, can help to stabilize novel states of consciousness, some of which appear to qualify as guidance (Winkelman, 2002, p. 124).

Even a former epiphany can become an obstacle to one's psychospiritual development if one tries to go back and reformulate it or seek to reconstitute an old experience in a new moment. Each new moment requires guidance to arise afresh in that moment. This indeed may be the very nature of guidance, having to continually renew itself while generating neural patterns of appreciation of and ease with novelty and impermanence that are in turn experienced as spontaneously arising comprehensions. Such an interpretation might help to explain why the experience of the absolute is itself reported by some participants as an experience of guidance. Unitive awareness, the realm of the Dharmakaya that is luminous emptiness, may erase from the mind all previous conditioning so as to allow one's refreshed awareness to be continually receptive to offerings of the newly arising moment.

It may also be necessary to distinguish between guidance itself and maintaining an awareness of guidance, the latter of which enables a dialogue with guidance. It appears that the experience of guidance may only be fully integrated at the moment when the distinction between *observing* and *being* the guidance process dissolves, and one is no longer even aware of a unitive experience as such. Perhaps at these moments one's perception becomes inseparable from one's meaning structure, in which case it is only upon reflection that one's identity is reconstituted. Such moments may provide an experiential sense of comprehension that transcends mere rational understanding, including a relaxation around the very need to know what is transpiring.

Several participants reported that dismantlement phases—including disorientation, not knowing, discomfort, vulnerability, crisis, confusion, and doubt—preceded their awakening to guidance. Most also spoke of engaging in ongoing practices of dismantling their identity by continuing to disidentify with increasingly subtle aspects of their ego. For several interviewees, signs of guidance appeared in early childhood; some credited this to past life karma and suggested that certain individuals may arrive in this world already “more dismantled” than others. They conveyed the sense that the ego rehearses its dissolution into awakened true nature through practices that increasingly align and familiarize the ego with guidance, including trust, relaxation, surrender, prayer, inquiry, and meditation. Chance, so to speak, comes to increasingly favor the prepared mind. The study findings suggest that encouraging conditions such as trust, gratitude, faith, a capacity for inner seeing and empathy, and supportive teachers and friends can assist someone in feeling safe and confident enough to willingly endure the dismantlement process.

The facilitating condition or first doorway of this process appears to be the attitude that Jung called a “turn,” in which the inclusive experience of the Self begins to occupy more awareness than does the exclusive ‘me-my-mine’ demands of the ego (Jung, 1978). Striving and suffering increasingly defer to effortlessness, as one undergoes a shift of identification from conditioned to unconditioned experience. Eventually, as the ego fully relaxes the fearful contractions that had once been germane to its experience, the magnetizing pull of the Self, or one’s true nature, becomes greater than that of conditioning, at which point

individuation is achieved and one's ultimate truth revealed. Although rebound states may lead to temporary despair and darkness, at this tipping point there may be no more need for exerting effort, as the gravitational pull of unconditioned awareness comes to exceed that of the conditioned mind.

Whereas one's awareness had formerly oriented to the ego as its default position, it now returns home to its true nature—from forgetfulness to remembrance, from lover to beloved. This shift in psychosomatic identification, which Jung postulated occurs in the experiential transit across the ego-Self axis, may in fact be generic to human change processes and transformation. According to Siegel (1999),

Patterns [of neuronal networks] emerge in interaction with the environment. Certain patterns of coordination become fairly stable under specific conditions or contexts...With repeated activation, the state of mind becomes more deeply engrained, and the state is remembered. According to Hebb's axiom ("Neurons that fire together wire together"), the brain is more likely to activate this clustering of processes in the future as a cohesive state of mind. (pp. 218-219)

Smith (1976) distinguishes between a "spiritual life" and a medley of spiritual experiences that are not stabilized into an ongoing and consistent awareness. In his view the hallmark of a spiritual life is an increasing recognition of one's unfolding experience as profound and meaningful, and a decreased experience of moments that distract one from that rich or sacred mode of participation in the world. This shift from a sporadic to an ongoing experience of reverent awareness results in a life that becomes increasingly imbued with occasions that support one's

awakening, rather than a mere accumulation of spiritual or peak experiences followed by repeated relapses into forgetfulness.

Tradition and Creativity

One has to, I think, submit themselves, supplicate themselves, to a particular order or organization. And my supplication came by utilization of a particular plant [*Mimosa hostilis*] and being there with nine others who ritualistically do this thing on a regular basis. Which gives an organization and a reason for being there, doing the same practice that this plant is teaching you all the time. So I went for the plant teaching to the plant itself rather than going to the master, the maestro, who can teach you the plant teaching. The reason I did that is because no one knew about this particular plant and what its teachings were. [S/B]

The paradox that both deference to tradition and unorthodoxy may be beneficial to psychospiritual development raises the issue of the roles creativity and novelty play in relation to guidance. Most of the study participants reported that originality, spontaneity, and improvisation were as vital to their self-discover process as their efforts to emulate and embody the teachings of such historical pioneers as the Buddha. Most also commented that established wisdom traditions, associated practices, lineage, and community significantly informed their lives as they sought to honor their own uniquely personal journeys. As [S/B] described this seeming paradox, "I finally worked it out through all of my traditions, through all of my ways, that this body belongs to me."

The more established, refined, and codified a tradition, the more challenging it may become to both authenticate the validity of new experience and preserve the freedom of expression that encourages

personal creativity and keeps a tradition dynamic. For example, Tibetan Buddhism can be seen to accommodate the individual in terms of offering diverse practices for different personality styles and capacities; nonetheless, having selected a particular deity to work with in deity yoga, Vajrayana practitioners strive to visualize the same being as is visualized by other practitioners. In contrast, Jungians are encouraged to discover their unique personal daemon. Raff (2000) explains,

Any image that emerges from the unconscious has a collective aspect to it, for the same image may appear to anyone. If I dream of a king who is the reflection of the self, that image is still a universal one, for anyone can dream of a king who represents the self. For the inner figure of the king to truly embody *my* self, as opposed to *the* self, it must incarnate my own uniqueness and individuality. When it does this, it ceases to be a universal image and becomes particular to me...One's uniqueness colors the inner figure, so that it ceases to be a universal image, and takes on the unique aspects of the soul. The soul aspect of the self is the essence of its individuality as manifested in a particular human being. The experience of one's own soul is often a visionary event that carries one into the psychoid. (p. 212)

One extreme stance emerging from this paradox of the personal and universal would be not allowing any individuality to influence a traditional practice, since any originality would only serve to corrupt a worthy teacher's flawless instruction. Such a fundamentalist position can become especially problematic for Westerners who may wish to maintain a degree of adherence to a tradition while at the same time feeling that regimented practices do not leave sufficient opportunity for individual and spontaneous processes and practices to organically unfold. Such potential dogmatism can also manifest in "the ritualization of religion: the process in which transcendence-inducing practices degenerate into

ineffective rituals, direct experience gives way to symbols of experience, and the understanding and appreciation of effective altered states is lost” (Palmer, 1998, p. 62).

Several interview participants communicated their inclination to express their personal creativity in their psychospiritual disciplines, be it through improvisation or by piecing together a syncretic personal practice. According to [D],

For me enlightenment was to be free, to run out like a child, wild in the universe. For him [the Karmapa] it was to be omniscient and all-knowing...So when you hear Shakyamuni it's different for you than when you hear the enlightenment from somebody else. You know, it was liberating that instead of having a conflict with the guru, it enabled me to see, “Oh, that's their bliss. That's their view.” But I have to also honor my view.

[B2] shares a similar perspective:

in the Western world we have codependence in the spiritual communities. That's where the cult comes into being, because people give up their freedom and their self-empowerment. They completely look for the guidance from other people. Buddha actually never told people that he is the guide. He *never* told people that he can give infallible guidance. Buddha always said, ultimately everything is within you. Wisdom, intelligence, everything's within *you*. *You* are the Buddha.

Another extreme position might be to advocate a radical break from the past, abandoning all traditional forms of psychospiritual practice in favor of perpetual improvisation. Someone with this viewpoint might argue that all prescriptive sadhanas derive from the spontaneity of the experience that originally inspired their codification. This perspective might deem established practices or rituals to be mere facsimiles or artifacts of organic processes that need to occur spontaneously in order to

be authentic; practices that align with one's deepest nature should thus manifest effortlessly by virtue of sacred inspiration. This purely self-styled approach, however, may be highly susceptible to the ego's momentary whims. Also, when seeking refuge from distractibility in something trustworthy—in times of confusion or despair, or at the moment of death—the completely independent and self-styled practitioner may not have anything experientially reliable to count on for psychological and spiritual support.

Not surprisingly, many of the study participants advocated a middle way as most conducive to balancing the gifts of the old and the new, the inherited and the original. As mentioned, attempting to rely wholly upon one's experience without the benefit of familiarity with a psychospiritual organizing system can be overwhelming and precarious. [S/B] shares his appreciation of the need for both instruction and improvisation, resulting in optimal psychospiritual evolution over time:

the construct, the organizational way to get there, the practice of the mandala, the teachings, the *darshan*. *Whatever*. That's what these people [Tibetan Buddhists] are bringing us. Something that they've learned over 600 years. A way of thinking about it and the potentiality of the arrival of the Buddha in this country on his own. They're giving us *their* ways of getting it. Well, *thanks* a lot...So how will it arise alone? I don't know...I don't think it's going to be in Tibetan form. I don't think it's going to be in Jack Kornfield form. I don't think it's going to be, you know, whatever those things are. I think it's going to have its own form. Whatever that is.

Several participants credited teachers for playing a pivotal role in helping students pare down vast amounts of available information within a tradition to that which is relevant to and appropriate for the student's unique disposition and capacities. Several participants meanwhile alluded

to the importance of recognizing the parameters of a teacher's domain of wisdom when appealing to them for guidance and allowing them to influence one's life. Healthy discernment requires assessing which of the teachers' exceptional qualities are applicable to one's own psychospiritual maturation. [J1], for example, describes her decision not to follow her Lakota teacher's encouragement to follow in her footsteps:

[Teacher's name] is both teaching people of other cultures her tradition, but also wanting to carry on the tradition in it purest form...And we were about to create a new sweat lodge for me to be the leader in and I would teach other people it. And it was at that point that I realized that that was not my calling...So I had to tell her that.

In Vajrayana Buddhism, the guru's potential scope of influence may be seen by some to be nearly total (Dorje, 2001). Study participants who spoke of taking on a guru, however, did not hint of abdicating personal responsibility for awakening to their own "inner" guidance; if anything, they set themselves a higher external standard by which to do so. In the West, where people invest a great deal of psychic energy seeking to separate from their parents, practitioners may feel an especially pronounced need to individuate from their spiritual teachers. It would appear from the interviewees' responses that indeed, one cannot be a source of transmission of freedom for others unless one has achieved a relative degree of freedom for oneself. In the words of [B2],

When you begin to develop a different relationship with your parents, elders, as well as also your spiritual masters too, it does not mean that once you have contact with inner guidance you're not going to listen to them...But no longer are you this little spiritual infant who constantly has to be dependent upon the grace and the mercy and the wisdom of the others, even spiritual teachers. So it's very self-empowering and really changes your relationship with your

spiritual teachers as well. And because you begin to realize that the ultimate guru lies within yourself.

Muqaddam (as cited in Palden Drolma, 2008) shares a similar perspective upon this paradoxical issue:

The spiritual guide is a catalyst, which can impart knowledge, guidance, and states of being. Yet, the work is in the hands of the student. Some teachers may fall into the role of being a supplier for the student due to the teacher's unresolved narcissistic needs, which results in having 'followers,' rather than students who are pioneering spirits, trying to fulfill their purpose. So there is a limit to the guidance. Yet it is necessary to have guides who are embodying Being. When a human being embodies Essence it is easier for other people to pick it up. It works like a magnet. It draws essence from others to come out. However, it is ultimately the student's personal work that makes the difference. The more work the student does on him/herself the more the universe mirrors it back. We cannot depend on the guide to be the source. (n.d., ¶ 2)

Form and Formlessness

"There ain't no looking for it. You have to be in that knowingness of it" [S/B].

The paradox of form and formlessness resides at the heart of guidance. Although guidance is an intrinsically relational construct, most study participants perceive any separateness between oneself and others to be ultimately illusory. Why then does guidance not come directly in a formless way to one's mind? Is it possible to directly transmit or receive guidance in an absolute way without form? [J1] reports,

And my experience of the Self-experience, capital "S," it does often happen when I'm with Rosie, because she is *my* manifestation of Self. Or, beyond Self. Because I think of Self as the part of *me* personally that is my sort of portal to the divine. And Rosie is over there, beyond the portal. She is

other than me. But she also is me, increasingly, in that we work together.

Personification may be a bridge mechanism by which to navigate the formless realm. Personification as an intermediary element involves an embodied form or narrative through which to conceptualize and communicate a process. It is interesting to note in this regard that many participants reported the most significant aspect of guidance to be the resultant states of being or awareness emerging from their contact with emissaries of guidance, rather than the phenomena of the diverse messenger beings or vehicles of transmission themselves. The interviewees' experiences also suggest that one's perceived separation from the harbingers of guidance is eventually recognized as a skillful means in service of unified awareness, in which one's experience of all of reality is no longer dual or nondual, but a distinction without separation.

Certain kinds of development may initially require such a relational dimension, beyond which exist further invitations to more subtle varieties of transpersonal experience. Raff (2000) describes this dynamic at play in the Jungian practice of active imagination:

As the first step in engaging the transcendent function, the ego turns to the unconscious with an open and receptive attitude. Given this ego attitude, the next job is to find a way to give a voice to the unconscious entity, so that its position and information may be accessed...Archetypes or complexes manifest as images, what Jung calls "personification"...The personification of the self...embodies the new center born within the psyche at this stage of the work . . . the beauty and mystery of the Self appears in a human form, one with which the ego can create a relationship of intimacy, love, and trust...Appearing in human form, the Self presents itself to the ego—with whom it cultivates a rapturous union forever. (pp. 18-19, 208-217)

It may be that the contents of consciousness are fundamentally symbolic, requiring dialectical modes of information exchange (Winkelman, 2002). Emissary vehicles of guidance from the inner or outer realms in service of opening to new states of awareness may play a necessary role for people to receive or perceive such knowledge. We have seen, for example, that in the initial phase of the guidance experience, guidance often assumes a 'user-friendly' form that a person is most likely to respond to in order to begin to disidentify with habituated egoic awareness. According to [S],

So when working with entheogens, realize that a lot of the spirit guides that come, some of them you've kind of preprogrammed and they're taking this form. It's just like, "Oh, you'll listen to Buddha?" [laughs] Then we'll play Buddha tapes! You know, but it's the energy. It's like, what's the energy that you get from listening to Buddha? And if you're Hindu, maybe it's going to be Krishna.

Each of the participants spoke of guidance in both personal and impersonal terms, recognizing its service on behalf of both the relative and absolute truth of human experience by illuminating one's individual life path and shared true nature. The participants also suggested that seeking and inquiry strategies in dualistic modes of awareness often need to precede the unconditioned unitive experience of spontaneous liberation. For example, in a relative stance, before total dissolution of self and other into the interdependent arising of all phenomena, distinct guidance entities may hold independent existences in their own dimensional realms of experience; a relational, as opposed to nondual, stance thus may be necessary to converse or participate with such self-existing entities.

The possibility that emptiness relies upon messenger forms becomes especially interesting in a tradition like Tibetan Buddhism, which is famous for its nondual teachings. Even Tibetan Buddhism, in which ostensibly no entities or persons ultimately exist, retains a fascination with personified forms, such as deities, to communicate or mediate experiences of nonduality. In the words of Almaas (2004),

the inner guidance of Being can arise as the co-emergence of pure awareness and basic knowing. Pure awareness penetrates the preconceptual obscurations, and basic knowing discriminates the specifics as insight. The conceptual dimension of the inner guidance challenges and highlights the nonconceptual differentiates in the obscurations, allowing the noetic dimension to discriminate these differentiations . . . When we recognize the experience of the soul there is the presence of awareness and the awareness has form but the awareness of the form is not separate from the form... this awareness of the form is completely nonconceptual. (pp. 346, 513)

Many participants' responses raise the question of whether the undifferentiated nondual state of awareness of the Dharmakaya constitutes a form of guidance as well as its source and destination. It may be difficult to ascertain, however, if an experience is truly formless when it is received or only apparently unitive due to its subtle nature, since the dynamics involved in such instances may be too fast and complex to tell apart in order to reveal their correlate structures. Indeed, some participants reported that they eventually came to recognize manifestation in its entirety revealing itself as an ongoing revelation of guidance: phenomenal existence self-liberating in the alchemical radiance of nondual awareness. Until that ultimate realization, however, guidance

implies and involves a desire to understand and discriminate the display of phenomenal manifestation, thus presuming a dualistic mind state.

Inner and Outer

Each one of us human beings, each sentient being in the world, is the center of the universe. And this won't make any sense if you just think geometry. But the energetic sense of the center of the universe. [S]

Do the spiritual entities in the imaginal and psychoid realms discussed by several participants enjoy an independent existence outside of the mind? If so, this would imply that transpersonal guidance phenomena are sustained by a source other than one's own consciousness. Whereas traditional Western psychology assumes all transpersonal phenomena to be a by-product of brain activity, a traditional shamanic perspective validates the autonomous existence of transpersonal entities. The ontological status of what is "inner" or "outer" in psychospiritual guidance thus remains in question, if the question itself is even valid for a phenomenon that seems to embody both characteristics. This both/and quality of guidance may be due to its apparent quantum nature, as previously discussed, or may simply reflect the poverty of current language to distinguish the various phenomena being examined.

Walsh (2000) notes that "Spirits may be seen outside or sensed inside" (p. 144), a bi-focal perspective that is supported by the reported experience of the study participants who discussed their contact with spirit guides. Walsh (2000) refers to the "exosomatic" and "imaginal" perspectives to clarify this apparent dichotomy:

Philosophically speaking we have here two different ontological perspectives. The shamanic view is a realist one since it regards the phenomena found in the journey as real, objective, and independent of the shaman's mind. The shaman views the journey as, to use the precise technical terms, truly *exosomatic* (outside the body) rather than *imaginal* (mind-created imagery). This perspective is consistent with the shamanic worldview, which holds that other worlds and spirits exist and can be accessed directly through cosmic traveling...More common today, however, is the subjective imaginal perspective that regards shamanic journeys and similar experiences as mind-created images. (p. 156)

Raff (2000) meanwhile demarcates the "inner" and "outer" as the division between the imaginal and psychoid realms:

Active imagination connects individuals with inner figures which, while very powerful, are clearly imaginal and derived from the psyche. These figures feel as if they were coming from within oneself. However, every so often, one may experience a figure that *feels* completely different. This figure feels as if it were coming from outside oneself, as if it existed in the external world, in the room in which one finds oneself. For example, one's eyes are open, and the felt sense is that one perceives a figure that does *not* come from within. The attention of the ego is focused outward, not inward. These are the experiences I refer to using the term "psychoid"...The psychoidal self is an image of the divinity that appears in a unique way to match the individuality of the person relating to it. The soul is psychoidal in the sense that it exists in a realm beyond the ordinary world, and is eternal in its own right. (pp. 212-217)

Jung (1967) also asserts the independent reality of the archetypes as evolving in and of themselves, apart from human consciousness. He writes, "Instead of deriving these figures [archetypal images] from our psychic conditions, we must derive our psychic conditions from these figures." (p. 299) Jung here implies that the inner figure exists apart from the ego and exerts influence upon it. Raff (2000) elaborates upon this theme:

The inner figure that one contacts in active imagination is autonomous, able to express itself without being dominated by the ego. At the same time, it is able to exercise a powerful influence upon the ego and its own psychological state...The ego can misinterpret, it can identify, it can fantasize, but it has a great deal of trouble manipulating inner figures. If active imagination is done properly, the inner figure speaks with its own voice...The autonomy and reality of inner figures is a very difficult concept to grasp. (pp. 21-28)

The experience of [J1] in meeting her spirit ally supports this perspective:

She indicated her name was Rosie. And when she said that, I realized this was not coming from my personal unconscious. Because that would not have been a name I would ever have chosen. She was her own entity. She comes from what Jung calls the *psychoid* reality. And she had come as an ally, in the shamanic literature. She had a lot to teach me and I could help her manifest in this world. So she's been teaching me ever since. And she's delighted to have this interview. [laughs] We talked about it this morning...Her teaching has been a real mixture of inner and outer. And the interplay of inner and outer.

Participant [J2] similarly reflects,

I tend to process what I experience in the outer world with my inner guide . . . Maybe I've had an influence on *it*. [laughs] Why not?...It also seemed to be deepened by my own experiences...serving as an analyst to other people. So the outer did influence the inner, too. It went both ways.

Walsh (2000) in turn holds that, "A more radical perspective is that of Tibetan Buddhism. Here the realms to which the yogi travels in dreams or meditation are regarded as mind creations, but so too is everything in ordinary waking experience" (p. 156). Guenther (1989) affirms this alternative perspective within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition:

Regardless of whether revelation is claimed to come from without or within, it never occurs in a vacuum . . . As this process [the realization of Buddhahood] unfolds, be it gradually or instantaneously, the mind comes to know itself through its imagery, which it recognizes as its own creation

and which it needs for arriving at its foreordained and pre-existing goal—knowledge...Inasmuch as knowledge 'reveals' the world in which it lives as its environment and which it discovers and creates by its act of self-creation, and inasmuch as this perpetual process of becoming self-conscious occurs here and now 'within' us and so is endogenous to itself, it is justifiable to speak of revelation from within. (Guenther, 1989, pp. 206, 214)

According to the Buddhist interviewees, outer experience becomes recognized as essentially indistinguishable from inner phenomena over time as all dualistic guidance serves the ultimate recognition of one's own nondual awareness. This belief is echoed in the words of prominent Jungian scholar Edward Edinger (1972): "The fact is, the conception of the Self is a paradox. It is simultaneously the center and the circumference of the circle of totality" (p. 6). Indeed, guidance in service of the Self is in service of the interdependent dynamism of personal and universal evolution. According to [B2],

Many people are not capable of realizing this highest level of inner guidance. That is, you are already inner guidance and you are already wisdom. You are already insight itself...So, in that sense, people are still searching for inner guidance.

Attending mindfully to both the inner and outer realms of experience calls to attention the issue of sources of authority, discerning when to trust one's own experience over that of a tradition or teacher. How does one validate one's own understanding when it differs from teachings and texts? Almaas (2002) succinctly describes this paradox:

A teacher functions basically as the guidance, or as the representative of the guidance...In time you learn from your external teacher how to orient toward your own deeper unfoldment, and thus become a guide to yourself. In that way, you reconnect to your inner guidance, which simply means that you can recognize how the optimizing force is functioning in your life. (p. 205)

Indeed, most participants reported their experience of diverse inner and outer sources of authentic guidance ultimately conjoining, since true guidance is always in service of the highest good of both the individual and the collective, the personal and the universal. Existential-humanistic psychologist Rollo May (as cited in Walsh, 2007) concurs with this perspective, asserting that “finding the center of strength within ourselves is in the long run the best contribution we can make to our fellow men” (p. 220).

The Mandala and the Spiral

You see the brocades of the Vajrayana as they create...a mandala. And you see all of these pieces and they've somehow crystallized it or organized it into form. And then you can take their form and just blow it away...just a nothingness coming from an emptiness coming into a form. And then you visualize it for the moment that you visualize it and then you see how it works together. And that's how Vajrayana is constructed or how it's defined. But I think the same thing happens in a shamanic course...So you have to choose...your identity or where your identity comes from. So I chose the center of the mandala. Because...I can't get a grip of it. I can't get a hold of it. I can become anything.
[S/B]

According to Shinoda Bolen (1979), Jung believed that the mandala “represented a meaning-giving center of the personality—which Jung called the Self and which was for him the goal of psychic development” (p. 49). Moacanin (1986) affirms this perspective, positing that for Jung the mandala constituted “an archetype of order, of psychic integration and wholeness...express[ing] in a symbolic way the violent clashes of opposites and their eventual reconciliation when the Self emerges at the

center of the psyche and is represented by an innermost point." (p. 70)

Jung (1965) himself writes of the mandala,

I saw that everything, all paths I had been following, all steps I had taken, were leading back to a single point—namely, to the mid-point. It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the centre. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the centre, to individuation...I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate. (p. 196)

Jung (as cited in Storr, 1973) took particular interest in the archetypal spiral in mandalas, which he describes as "magic circles symbolic of the nuclear axiom of the human psyche whose essence we do not know" (p. 213). Both the mandala and the spiral emerge as fitting metaphoric and imagistic symbols for guidance, reflecting its structural and dynamic aspects, its simultaneous attributes of domain and process, and its purpose and course of transformation. In many cultures the archetypal expression of the spiral represents the journey into the inner sanctums of the collective unconscious and back again with a renewed appreciation of one's purpose and identity. Indeed, ascending spirals have for millennia represented for human beings the reconciliation of the old unconscious order with new elements of conscious creation (Metzner, 1998). In the words of Edinger (1972),

The process of alternation between ego-Self union and ego-Self separations seems to occur repeatedly throughout the life of the individual both in childhood and in maturity. Indeed, this cyclic (or better, spiral) formula seems to express the basic process of psychological development from birth to death. (p. 5)

A person may cycle through conditioned patterns and understandings multiple times, at each stage gaining greater clarity,

familiarity, and trust with various themes or issues. Similarly, one may think one has accessed the inner sanctums of a mandala when one has in fact only entered its outer gates. Other doors may continue to present themselves in the mandala's labyrinth, revealing many concentric borders and breakthroughs to the mandala's symbolic central and final awakening. The experience of guidance as a dynamic structure thus becomes more refined and nuanced as it becomes reinforced and stabilized into an increasingly consistent and cohesive state of mind. In the words of Tibetan Buddhist scholar-practitioner Reginald Ray (2002), the mandala is nothing other than

the underlying structure of the world that is already there, energizing and empowering all sentient beings, but hidden from view. All that is needed is for us to tune ourselves in to it and realize that our lives are nothing other than an expression of enlightened energy. (p. 152)

The results of this study suggest that the guidance process encourages an increasingly subtle degree of sensitivity to longstanding habit-patterns. Guidance may thus address priorities in our psychospiritual evolution in a sequential fashion unique to each individual, evoking Maslow's progressive hierarchy of needs (1971). One might need to move through a certain phase of the guidance process at a particular time in one's life, after which it may lose its developmental pertinence. For example, one may first need to develop trust in the supportive wisdom of one's own thoughts and feelings before positing faith in the intrinsic nature of the world as benevolent. Guidance thus may be viewed as a developmental process that comes to fruition more for some individuals than for others; for some it may reveal dualistic

gradations of the ego's increasing transparency, and for others, who have realized its full expression, it may manifest as an experience of nondual consciousness.

As mentioned in the Literature Review, Washburn's theoretical model posits a similarly spiraled course of psychospiritual development as is here described. Once guidance reveals itself, ongoing consequences appear to emerge that lead one again and again through the guidance process in successively deeper ways. As the means to guidance become its ends, the ends become beginnings for new means in a potentially infinite process of awakening to the center of the mandala that is simultaneously the ultimate destination of guidance and its point of embarkation.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

“Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string” (Emerson, 1841, p. 19).

Limitations of Present Research

The outstanding limitation of this present study is its limited participant sample. A larger and more diverse subject sample, in terms of both sociocultural and psychospiritual backgrounds, would contribute to a greater generalizability of future study results. Many prominent and relevant wisdom traditions were not included in this study, including the mystical branches of Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism, as well as other indigenous paths of inquiry. Although the participants did represent diverse cultural backgrounds, they shared a similar worldview as United States residents. In regards to gender, only 2 of the 8 study participants were women. While historically the four traditions sampled for this study prominently feature male representatives, the disproportionate representation of females in this study nonetheless diminishes the generalizability of the research data across genders.

One inherent limitation of this research was the challenge of locating individuals qualified to meet this study’s participation criteria. The subtler an experience, such as certain manifestations of guidance, the smaller the available subject pool from which to collect data on that experiential phenomenon. Subjects were purposefully selected for this study due to their extensive familiarity with certain psychospiritual

traditions; selecting only experienced exemplars, however, also limits the generalizability of this study's findings.

The signature strength of this inquiry—its cross-cultural design—is also its main liability, as it restricts the possibility of in-depth exploration of any one of the four traditions under examination. Another design limitation is that thematic analysis entails a great deal of time, involving detailed and multiple reviews of transcripts to generate source text elements and prolonged inspection of the source text elements to recognize latent patterns. Similarly, although NVivo 7 allows the researcher to organize vast amounts of interview data, this impressive capacity can itself become a source of distraction if the researcher is not mindful about resisting the urge to become overly absorbed by minute details of the data. By acknowledging and articulating this study's limitations, I hope that these shortcomings can be transformed into research strengths, both as a result of the questions they raise and their illumination of unresolved issues for further study.

Unresolved Issues and Recommendations for Future Research

This exploration does not presume to be in any way conclusive, definitive, or the only viable perspective in examining the multifaceted phenomenon of psychospiritual guidance. A substantially longer study is needed to adequately expound upon the many implications of the emergent themes from the interview data. The thematic analysis methodology used in this study is both appropriate and effective in mapping subjective experience among a small sample. However, it would

be productive to use quantitative research methods to draw data from a significantly larger and more diverse pool of participants, especially in regard to gender and cultural backgrounds. As new dimensions of guidance often unfold for individuals over time, a longitudinal study would also shed invaluable light on developmental aspects of this phenomenon as they unfold in real-time for interview subjects.

I did not analyze common themes or anomalies within each tradition, as a sample of only two representatives from each tradition does not seem significant enough to draw distinct findings for such an analysis. Future researchers may decide to study one or more of these traditions in depth in regard to guidance, or to continue this inquiry with other traditions. Recommended traditions highlighting guidance include the mystical branches of prominent wisdom traditions, including Islamic Gnosticism, Jewish Kabbalah, mystical Christianity, Taoism, and the scholarship of Sri Aurobindo.

There exists a tension in all thematic analysis between seeking commonalities and honoring differences between samples. I chose to emphasize similarities over anomalies between individuals or groups in the data. A future approach using the same data and methodology could assume that all the participants are speaking about different phenomena unless proven otherwise, potentially revealing very different findings. Future researchers could also use this data to note any shared absences or dense concentrations of thematic content between traditions, revealing potentially important patterns of variation. For example, different wisdom

traditions and practices may place relative emphases on particular phases of guidance or on its less or more mature manifestations.

Due to time and accessibility limitations, I did not ask follow-up questions after the single-session interviews and the participants did not offer feedback regarding the study results, both of which may have brought greater clarity and specificity to some of the emergent themes. In any discussion of developmental processes there is also no sure way to confirm the validity of another's recounted memories, as it is inherently difficult to reliably reconstruct past experiences and perspectives after one has matured to new experiential understandings. However, as mentioned in the Methods section, Grice's four maxims represent a sound verification strategy for qualitative data in general and could be used retroactively by future researchers to validate the authenticity of the experiences reported in these interview transcripts.

The participants discussed a number of different ways in which people recognize and utilize guidance, suggesting an experientially informed stage model that entails specific conditions and activities conducive for attuning to guidance at varying levels of psychospiritual development. Such a model would not be unlike Wilber's stage models, though would be grounded in experiential data instead of theory. As I did not analyze the ways in which the study participants embodied guidance during the interview process itself, future studies could use diverse technologies to measure in real-time the psycho-physiological states in which individuals receive guidance at different phases of its developmental process. Both scholars and practitioners thus stand to

benefit from more precise assessments of the varied benefits and challenges to working with psychospiritual guidance over time.

It should be kept in mind that this dissertation is a story crafted by this author's guidance in relationship with the collected data. Another researcher may have generated a very different set of conclusions. While I conducted my initial coding of the transcripts using a fine semantic comb, both my initial choices of what source text elements to code and what meta-coding procedures to use were subjective by nature and open to interpretation. My preferential bias towards a transpersonal perspective upon psychological phenomena may also have unduly influenced both my coding procedure and the resulting thematic analysis.

Each code to which I assigned a relevance or definition has many possible interpretations, and there are many potential codes that I may have altogether missed. According to Boyatzis (1998), such ultimate ambiguity is endemic to qualitative research. It is my intention, however, to mitigate unnecessary obfuscation by making this process as transparent as possible. I also hope that future researchers will make use of this study's data and findings to deepen our collective understanding of psychospiritual guidance.

Novel Contributions to Qualitative Research

In addition to subject-specific contributions, this study points towards a new approach to psychospiritual research in which the researcher is called upon to "resonate" with his or her interview subjects in such a way as to activate the highest complexity and coherence of mind

between them in service of the greatest clarity of articulation of the phenomenon in question (Siegel, 1999). The psychospiritual researcher is thus invited and challenged to assume or drop certain attitudinal stances, or to embody or cease to embrace certain states of being in order to most optimally “show up” to the research process and the phenomenon under investigation. This experiential research approach builds upon Paolo Freire’s participatory action research endeavors and Moustakas’ heuristic approach to qualitative research, in which one recognizes oneself to be a participant in the research phenomenon and acknowledges that observation necessarily alters the phenomenon one is observing (Freire, 1972; Moustakas, 1994). I endeavored to objectively attend to factors that could have led to significant distortions or partiality throughout the course of this study so as to reduce an overly biased interpretation of the results. This said, I recognize that my participation in this process was inherently biased both in general by my subjective being in the world and in particular by my personal engagement with the guidance process I was studying.

I approached the semi-structured interviews with a relatively transparent interviewing style, involving both personal disclosure and improvisation in following the tangential interests of the participants. As I engaged in these discussions, an autonomous flow of information exchange consistently took place that evoked a deep resonance or feeling of connection between myself and the interview subjects. In retrospect, I can see that I needed to experientially prepare myself to talk with the study participants so as to resonate with them in such an attuned manner.

Some of the interviewees mentioned their appreciation of the importance of such attunement in the interview process, as reflected by the experience of [S]:

And the big gift of your inquiry is that I think it's helping people realize that we [already] know everything...I think Socrates was right. And the idea is you know everything, you just don't know you know it...So the guides are real helpers in that regard...for a long time as a kid I thought that this was everybody's experience and I was kind of surprised to find out that it wasn't. And I don't think in my life I've ever had a conversation like this, but just little glimpses of pictures. And it just may be that people don't know how to language the experience yet, which is why I'm excited about your work. And that can we validate it for kids. Maybe we should do another interview [laughs], because man oh man, you got me thinking about stuff. It was so good to plug into that...We're flowing energy all the time. So was that happening here? It was throughout.

[S/B] meanwhile commented upon an element of predestination involved in the interview meeting as revealed by his guidance, as well the importance of sharing his experiences with a mutually inquisitive mind:

I've been told, in very, very short ways, that people are going to come and want to hear the words that I've got to say. So I'm releasing for the first time in my life. This methodology that I've learned or had to learn in this way in talking to people like you. Because this is the way it was supposed to be.

The model of researcher I am proposing represents an amalgam of the detached observer and the participant who identifies exclusively with a certain tradition and may be vulnerable to championing one tradition over others. While this suggested model of independent researcher is not particularly affiliated with any single community, he or she seeks to cultivate an experiential understanding and inner awareness of the phenomenon being explored. Engaged participants and detached

researchers embody value systems that are traditionally viewed as mutually exclusive through the lens of the empirical method that advocates a scientific caution against becoming personally involved in one's study matter.

My proposed hybrid model of psychospiritual researcher thus mediates two realms that are conventionally held to be distinct. Such a composite stance or bifocal perspective is situated between scientific inquiry and psychospiritual practice, constituting a middle ground in qualitative research, in which the researcher is perceived or recognized by study participants to be a mutually engaged student or seeker of the experiential truths being investigated. In effect, I am proposing a participatory transpersonal researcher who engages in certain preparatory practices, embodies certain states, or sustains certain intentions or attitudes in order to engage in psychospiritual fields of inquiry.

I also encourage this newly proposed type of psychospiritual researcher to be in touch with both inner and outer resources of guidance so as to help deepen their experiential inquiry into their chosen subject matter from a research perspective. In transpersonal research, this engagement with psychospiritual guidance might manifest as a capacity to more readily recognize synchronistic occurrences as they arise, a more sensitive intuition about the appropriateness of prospective interviewees, or more skillful use of transpersonal practices that result in a more subtle and intimate understanding and articulation of research findings. This experiential approach to psychospiritual inquiry is additionally likely to benefit from a balanced stance of being well-informed as well as open to

not knowing, while also drawing upon a background in psychology and spiritual theory and practice.

Clinical Significance

In addition to its contribution to spiritual maturation, communion with guidance provides an inherently corrective psychological experience. While authentic guidance is always in service of ultimate truth, its relative clinical value as a resource lies in its ability to facilitate therapeutic states of consciousness, support movement towards autonomy and individuation, enhance confidence in internal experience, promote greater ease in decision-making, encourage a greater range of conscious choice, and support relaxation and experiential well-being. Enhanced psychospiritual guidance is thus of clear benefit to psychotherapy clinicians and clients as well as to spiritual practitioners. Therapeutic efficacy in any domain is likely to be enhanced if clinicians and clients are better able to recognize and work with guidance when it arises from the common ground of the therapeutic encounter.

An enhanced awareness of available options and trust in one's capacity to choose one's own destiny are qualities that contribute to positive self-esteem and facilitate the dismantling of self-imposed limitations; these strengths support both the personal and transpersonal planes of identification. Beyond intellectual knowing only, learning to fully trust one's own experience from a place of both embodied knowing and unknowing also allows one to improve coping strategies and decision-making abilities in times of difficulty or crisis and to develop

internal loci of control that are less reactive to past conditioning and outer events.

In addition to the guidance principle in general having clinical relevance, each of the four traditions explored in this dissertation can be seen in particular to contribute to the clinical realm. Jungian psychology and the Diamond teachings explicitly address both psychological and spiritual dimensions of well-being. In the succinct words of Jung (1978), “The world of gods and spirits is truly ‘nothing but’ the collective unconscious inside me” (p. 75). Almaas meanwhile writes of the Diamond Approach,

Because of our particular vision of Reality, it is not completely accurate to think of this approach as spiritual work, for this work does not separate the spiritual from the psychological. Neither does it see these two as separate from the physical everyday life and scientific investigation of the content of perception. (p. 588, n. 2)

The psychosomatic investigatory practice of inquiry as described by the Diamond practitioners in this study shares much in common with Eugene Gendlin’s contemporary practice of *Focusing*, an increasingly mainstream transpersonal practice in contemporary psychotherapy that clearly makes use of a central guidance practice. Focusing is “a body-based technique that helps to confirm inner knowing...The key concept of Focusing is the felt sense: a body sensation that is meaningful” (Palmer, 1998, pp. 159-160). Many of the study participants talked about the importance of subtle somatic sensing, which they expressed as a “felt sense,” energetic feeling, or presence of Being.

Elements of shamanism are also exhibiting an increasingly direct contemporary influence upon Western clinical practices, revealing themselves to be increasingly relevant to the concerns of modern Western individuals. Winkelman (2000) states,

Shamanism, one of humanity's most ancient traditions, has recently reemerged in contemporary societies' religious, spiritual, and healing practices and consciousness traditions...The importance of these universal phenomena of shamanism and the alterations of consciousness involved have traditionally been attributed to the supernatural and spiritual domains...The emerging understanding of shamanistic practices locates their foundations in human biopsychological potentials and in concerns with identity, emotion, attachment, sense of self, and personal conviction that transforms consciousness. (p. xii)

Linda Schierse Leonard (as cited in Sandner & Wong, 1997)

meanwhile comments on the prevalence of ancient shamanic techniques in modern psychotherapeutic practice:

Contemporary psychotherapists are utilizing shamanic practices such as waking visions, archetypal dreams, imaginal work, body experiences, and even entering into an altered state of consciousness themselves as they dive with their clients into the deep water of the psyche...Shamanism unfocuses the mind, loosens the ego from its rigid outward ties, and allows it to descend into the other, inward reality of the core psyche. (p. xii)

Such shamanic practices as merging with a power animal, akin to visualizing oneself as a deity in Vajrayana Buddhism, can help to free the mind of limiting self-definitions as it simultaneously acquires greater resources for efficacy in the world. According to Walsh (2007), in shamanic practices,

Several psychological mechanisms may be at work. These include role-playing, identification, permission giving (being given permission to feel powerful, effective, etc.) and acting "as if" (acting as if one had a particular desired quality). But

whatever the mechanism, it is clear that visualizing oneself merging with a powerful figure is widespread across religious traditions, is dramatically empowering, and is increasingly used in psychotherapy. (p. 135)

While prohibited from clinical research and practice for several decades due to legal restriction, certain entheogens such as ayahuasca may also play a helpful role in certain psychotherapeutic contexts, helping as they have for millennia in their ancient shamanic context “to manage developmental or crises-induced needs for integration of conscious and unconscious processes” (Winkelman, 2000, p. 223).

All of the participants report that guidance inspires altruistic and selfless action, which in turn reactivates guidance. Enhanced service inspires greater health and well-being, while increased well-being motivates deepened service. In the words of Maslow (as cited in Walsh, 2007),

The best way to become a better ‘helper’ is to become a better person. But one necessary aspect of becoming a better person is *via* helping other people...Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin. (pp. 220-221)

Buddhism in particular advocates selfless motivation and altruistic practice as essential ingredients of happiness. Diverse Buddhist practices aimed towards cultivating mindfulness, loving-kindness, and selflessness, all of which are foundational cornerstones of more advanced Vajrayana teachings, are also becoming increasingly popular adjuncts to Western psychotherapeutic practices (Welwood, 2000).

From Theory to Practice: A Personal Process

I am contributing a reflection on my own experience of writing this dissertation in the hope that a heuristic perspective on this process from the researcher's vantage point may offer some additional insights to the lived experience of psychospiritual guidance. I recorded my experiences as they arose throughout the course of this exploration, feeling from the outset that the investigation itself might emerge as a crucible for the guidance process.

I initiated this study holding loosely the assumption that some kind of a process may occur in some individuals' psychospiritual development that encourages and assists Huston Smith's (2003) articulation of a "spiritual life", in which over time more aspects of one's existence are experienced as part of a meaningful process of ongoing revelation and less as a distraction from it. This process seemed to be in service of both remembrance and discovery of a spiritual rhythm, spontaneous capacity, or embodied faith that either gradually or suddenly becomes accessible to conscious awareness and experience.

I found myself increasingly interested in how individuals experienced such a possible course of transformation. I also found it curious that I was having trouble finding names for this shift of consciousness and for processes that potentially facilitate or assist its occurrence. As I became more deeply immersed in the psychospiritual literature, I became intrigued by reports indicating that various forms of guidance in this process make themselves available in some individuals'

lives, and that the capacity for attuning to this guidance can develop to the point where it is accessed on demand or simply flows when needed.

In the initial stages of this inquiry I felt overwhelmed by the abundance of seemingly unrelated aspects of psychospiritual guidance articulated in the research literature. I often felt as if I were an apprentice juggler trying desperately to manage a steady stream of eclectic objects flying haphazardly over my head. I also felt compelled for a considerable duration at the outset of my inquiry to sift through a voluminous amount of literature among the four traditions in question, much of which did not directly inform my literature review.

My dissertation chair commented that this prolonged initial stage of my research approach revealed “a divergent curiosity and convergent resistance.” I originally related to this compulsion for expansion over contraction and breadth over depth as a nasty habit that called for restraint. Eventually, however, I came to see that my aversion to prematurely narrowing down my exploration naturally subsided once I felt assured that I had combed through enough theoretical material to duly discern and examine the phenomenon under investigation. Following this prolonged stage of data collection and differentiation came an equally long period of integration, during which I worked assiduously with the Nvivo 7 software to distill the 115 original source text elements themes down to the 70 to be presented in the results summary.

I made a conscious decision to trust arising connections in my data; this is an optimistic research stance that is distinctly different from the “objective” mindset germane to most empirical research. As time

progressed, I found myself increasingly trusting a strengthening intuition that the process of a meaningful unfolding experience was both informing and steering my inquiry. I began to feel as if the phenomenon of psychospiritual guidance was utilizing my exploration as a vessel through which to articulate and share its essential aspects to a larger audience. I also developed an increasing conviction that all the traditions and participants involved in this study were speaking of diverse experiential gradations and facets of the same phenomenon, albeit in often very different ways.

I sought to apply the guidance most of the strategies culled from the literature and interviewees to the dissertation process itself. One of these strategies was a great deal of provisional and ad-hoc activity. I explored various practices as they emerged in the course of my research so as to have a feel for their experiential dimensions. Of these, I made extensive use of meditation, inquiry, supplication to awakened beings with whom I felt a resonant connection, direct appeal to the Diamond Body, paying attention to information coming from different energetic centers in my body, dream work, and active imagination. I also engaged in extensive and ongoing collaboration and consultation with others throughout the research and writing process.

I discerned which guidance strategies were more or less effective for me by contrasting the feeling of murkiness and frustration that would often saturate my mind while feeling lost and besieged by doubt, with the experience of clarity, warmth, enthusiasm, efficiency, spaciousness, stillness, and a subtle inner felt sense of a sentient presence that emerged

when I felt realigned with my personal guidance. In retrospect I feel that I serendipitously picked up pieces of wisdom throughout the dissertation process and trusted my own guidance to help me assemble them when I was ready to make sense of them. I certainly felt that my own experiential intimacy with guidance deepened over time in terms of how I approached this study, manifesting in increased confidence that I was able to draw from diverse sources of wisdom that lay beyond my usual egoic awareness. These states of being became easier and easier to access as time progressed and as I became more confident and trusting in the ever-present availability of guidance when called upon.

This exploration held many unexpected turns, U-turns, and prolonged periods of apparent meandering, which in retrospect appear to have been essential to my nonlinear process of discovery. I gradually came to understand that the process of getting lost and found while immersed in the data was not only unavoidable, but indeed indispensable. In retrospect, even writing blocks and dead ends of inquiry seem to have been informed by an underlying intelligence guiding my circumambulatory journey. Personal bouts of confusion and frustration repeatedly gave way to openings of clarity and progression in a cyclical fashion, each revisitation of obscurity or light offering a new perspective upon an increasingly familiar landscape.

The interview experiences consistently testified to the mind as a field phenomenon rather than a separate entity, as I often felt an embodied resonant connection with each of the interviewees that stood apart from a standard conveyance of intellectual information. Many

months were required to locate qualified and willing study participants, involving a great deal of openness to and trust in the subject recruitment phase. As the seeming fruition of this lengthy process, an experience of guidance seemed to activate readily for me when meeting with the study participants, manifesting as a facilitative, resonant, and empathic cognitive, affective, and somatic attunement through mutually engaging dialogue. It was a great honor to sit with these 8 inspiring individuals and to receive the generous and articulate transmissions of their life experiences in an experiential realm that is often ignored, dismissed, or at best little understood in the mainstream North American culture in which this study was enacted.

There are many paths to awakening and numerous guiding lights by which to recognize and traverse them. Given the abundance of psychological and spiritual teachings available in the West, we now enjoy the unique opportunity to utilize a variety of skillful means to benefit from the guidance enjoyed by many of our forbears. In this time of rapid change at the dawn of the twenty-first century, where so much hope and fear for our collective evolution hangs in the balance, there is an especially timely need to draw attention to effective methods of attuning to reliable sources of both inner and outer guidance. I am grateful for this dissertation process for both helping to clarify the relevance of guidance in my own life and for providing the opportunity to further the collective comprehension and application of this vital aspect of consciousness on behalf of others. In the same way that the simple act of mindful observation can influence an occurrence, it is my hope that this study's

sustained inquiry into psychospiritual guidance contributes to the amplification of this essential phenomenon in humanity's collective awareness in service of the happiness and freedom of all beings.

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APPENDIX A: THEMATIC ANALYSIS CODING STRUCTURE

This outline contains all of the themes presented in the Results Summary for ease of reference. The capitalized words correspond to the primary source text elements derived from the QSR Nvivo 7 software and listed alphabetically in Appendix B.

I. Stage 1: Preparing for Guidance (Pre)

A. Facilitating Conditions for Guidance

i. Predispositional Influences

1. Recognition of TRUE NATURE
2. Recognition of LIFE PATH
3. INNER SENSING and INTUITION
4. EMPATHIC Sensitivity

ii. Environmental Influences

1. MENTORS
2. Psychospiritual TRADITIONS
3. FAMILY and COMMUNITY
4. Conditions and TIMING
5. SUFFERING
6. GRACE and BLESSINGS

B. Initiating Actions and Embodiments for Guidance

i. Volitional Activities

1. DISCIPLINED PRACTICE and CONCENTRATION
2. PRAYER and INTENTION
3. MEDITATION
4. INQUIRY and CONTEMPLATION
5. ACTIVE IMAGINATION & DREAM WORK
6. DEITY YOGA
7. ENTHEOGENS
8. Provisional ACTION

ii. Receptive Activities

1. Objective OBSERVING and Love of the Truth
2. OPENING to and ACCEPTING not knowing
3. REST

iii. Conducive States of Being

1. TRUST and CONFIDENCE
2. SPACIOUSNESS
3. GRATITUDE and HUMILITY
4. LOVE and COMPASSION

C. Inhibitory Actions and Embodiments for Guidance

1. DOUBT
2. FEAR and ANXIETY
3. PREFERENCE, ATTACHMENT, and JUDGMENT

II. Stage 2: Experiencing Guidance (Mid)

A. Manifestations of Guidance

i. Vehicles and Modalities of Guidance

1. AWARENESS and CLARITY
2. FEELINGS and SENSATION
3. THOUGHTS and INTERNAL VOICES
4. SIGNS and SYNCHRONICITIES
5. SPIRIT ALLIES
6. INNER GURU
7. DIAMOND BODY and Diamond Guidance
8. DREAMS
9. COUNSEL
10. SKILLFUL ACTION
11. ALL FORMS

ii. Developing Awarenesses of Guidance

1. Increased AVAILABILITY
2. Increased RESPONSIVENESS
3. Change in relationship to SUFFERING
4. Increased SERVICE and HEALING
5. Increased INTEGRITY and responsibility
6. UNITIVE experience

III. Stage 3: Integrating Guidance (Post)

A. Authenticating Guidance

i. Qualities of True Guidance

1. UNWAVERING and ENDURING

2. Felt PRESENCE
3. JOY and COMFORT
4. ATTRACTION
5. POWERFUL
6. SIMPLICITY

ii. Strategies of Verification

1. Inner DISCERNMENT
2. CONSULTATION and COUNSEL
3. Confirmation by EXPERIENCE
4. DIFFERENTIATION and INTEGRATION

B. Developmental Trends to Guidance

i. Changes in Locus of Identity

1. MIND, HEART, and BELLY
2. AGGREGATE wisdom

ii. Changes In Relationship to Guidance

1. Evolution from state to TRAIT
2. From FAMILIAR forms to all
3. Increased CORRELATION between inner and outer
4. From gross to SUBTLE
5. From intrusive to RECEPTIVE

iii. Diminishing of Inhibiting Conditions

1. OBSCURATION
2. DOUBT and FEAR
3. PREFERENCE
4. IGNORING guidance

C. Inauthentic Expressions of Guidance

- i. Egoic CONDITIONING
- ii. MALEVOLENCE

V. Stage 4: Transcending Guidance (Post-Post)

A. Moving Beyond Guidance

- i. INTERCONNECTEDNESS
- ii. WAY OF LIFE

APPENDIX B: SOURCE TEXT ELEMENTS

This is a comprehensive list of all the source text elements, in capital letters, and their synonymous descriptors utilizing QSR Nvivo 7 computer-assisted organizational software.

ACCEPTING, Acceptance
ACTION, Doing
AGGREGATE
ANIMALS
ARCHETYPES
ATTACHMENT, Clinging, Grasping, Selfishness
ATTRACTION
AVAILABILITY
BELLY
BLESSING
CLARITY
COMFORT, Feels Good, Pleasure, Enjoyment, Humor, Levity,
 Laughter, Painless
COMMUNITY, Relationship, Friends, Reciprocity
COMPASSION, Goodness, Kindness, Benevolence, Love, Loving
CONCENTRATION, Focus, Attention
CONDITIONING, Habit, Karma, Psychological Patterns
CONFIDENCE, Conviction, Certainty, Empowerment, Fearlessness
DEATH, Dying, Mortality
CONFLICT, Disagreement, Argumentation, Confrontation, Fighting,
 Dissonance, Tension, Struggle, Impasse, Misunderstanding
CONSULTATION, Dialogue
CONTEMPLATION, Reflection
CORRELATION, Alignment, Harmony, Balance, Attunement,
 Connection, Recognition, Resonance, Reconciliation, Affinity,
 Confirmation
COUNSEL, Advice, Didactic, Authority
DEVELOPMENT, Growth, Evolution, Transformation, Individuation,
 Learning
DIALECTIC, Duality
DIFFERENTIATION, Unraveling, Untangling, Revealing, Uncovering,
 Unwinding Dismantling
DISCERNMENT, Interpretation, Evaluation, Negotiation
DISCIPLINE, Practice, Work, Effort, Trying, Striving, Determination,
 Perseverance
DOUBT, Confusion Ambivalence, Insecurity, Indecision, Hesitation,
 Wavering, Lost, Struggle, Forgetting
DREAMS
EGO, False Self
EMPATHY, Empathic
ENDURING
ENERGY

ENTHEOGENS, Psychedelics
 EQUANIMITY, Impartiality, Indiscrimination, Objectivity
 EXPERIENCE, Process, Gradual, Little Pieces Over Long Time
 FALLIBILITY, Not Knowing, Ignorance, Stupidity, Mistakes, Errors,
 Delusion
 FAMILIAR, Recognition
 FAMILY, Childhood, Youth
 FEAR, Fright, Anxiety
 FEELINGS, Emotions
 FORM
 FREEDOM, Self-Determination, Choice, Decision-Making
 GENDER
 GRACE, Luck, Fortune, Transmission, Empowerment
 GRATITUDE, Fortunate
 GROUNDED, Centered, Ordered
 HEALING, Health
 HEART
 HUMILITY
 IDENTITY
 IGNORING
 IMAGINAL, Imagination
 INNER GURU
 INNER SENSING, Mystical Experience, Powers, Divination
 INTEGRITY, Character, Authenticity, Morality, Values
 INQUIRY
 INTEGRATION, Actualization, Gestation, Assembling
 INTENTION, Willingness
 INTERCONNECTEDNESS, Inseparability, Unity, Indivisibility, Oneness
 INTUITION, Hunch
 JOY, Happiness, Bliss
 JUDGMENT, Criticality
 KNOWING, Seeing, Insight, Realization, Wisdom, Primordial Intelligence
 LOCUS OF IDENTITY, Energetic center
 MALEVOLENCE, Ill Will
 MANDALA, Center, Circle
 MEDITATION
 MIND, Mental, Cognitive, Consciousness, Awareness
 MUNDANE, Clairvoyance, Realm
 OBSCURATION, Challenges, Obstacles, Risk, Vulnerability, Overwhelm,
 Victimization, Dark Night of Soul, Rebound Effect
 OBSERVING, Witnessing, Looking, Seeing
 OPENING, Openness, Unfolding
 PATH, Destiny, Journey, Mission, Assignment, Task, Purpose, Calling
 POWERFUL, Importance, Potent, Heavy, Forceful, Numinous
 PRACTICES, Skillful Means, Technologies, Rituals, Ceremonies, Structure,
 Retreat, Vision Quests, Sadhanas, Exercises, Skill, Capacity, Active
 Imagination, Sand Tray, Dream Work, Deity Yoga, Analysis
 PRAYER, Asking For Guidance, Supplication
 PREFERENCE, Desire, Agenda

PRESENCE, Being
 PROTECTION, Safety, Support, Reinforcement
 RECEPTIVE, Receiving, Listening, Paying Attention
 REMEMBERING, Memory, Past Life
 RESPONSIVENESS
 REST, Relax, Relief, Calm, Peace
 REVERENCE, Awe
 SEEKING, Searching, Looking For
 SELFLESSNESS, Egolessness
 SENSATION, Felt Sense, Physicality, Body, Somatic
 SERVICE
 SETTING, Conditions, Circumstances
 SILENCE, Quiet
 SIMPLICITY, Simple
 SPACIOUSNESS, Space, Openness, Vastness
 SPIRIT ALLIES, Deities, Guides, Helpers, Angels, Beings, Entities,
 Dakinis, Dharmapalas
 SPONTANEITY (of Insight, of Feeling), Instantaneous Revelation
 SUBTLE
 SUFFERING, Pain, Abuse, Wounding, Sickness, Illness, Disease, Shame,
 Embarrassment
 SURRENDER, Letting Go
 SYNCHRONICITY, Meaning, Significance, Sign, Mirroring, Holographic,
 Reflection
 TEACHER, Master, Guru, Counselor, Advisor, Analyst
 THOUGHTS, Thinking, Intellect, Cognition, Ideas, Understanding,
 Rational, Mental
 TIMING, Time, Readiness, Urgency, Transition
 TRADITIONS, Psychospiritual Lineages, Religions, World-Views,
 Cultures, Cosmologies, Teachings, Readings
 TRAIT
 TRUE NATURE, Buddha Nature, God, Self, Being, Beloved, Higher
 Self, Divine, Innate Nature
 TRUST, Faith, Devotion
 SHOCK, Surprise, Trickster, Random
 ULTIMATE TRUTH, Awakening, Enlightenment, Absolute Reality,
 Emptiness, Void
 UNIQUE, Distinct, Original, Unusual, Strange, Weird, Unexpected
 UNITIVE, Nondual
 UNWAVERING, Stability, Constancy, Steadfastness, Consistency,
 Persistence
 VISUAL, Vision, Pictures, Patterns, Colors, Aesthetic
 VOICES, Auditory, Hearing, Words, Articulation, Talking
 WAITING, Patience, Non-Hurried
 WAY OF LIFE

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE OF INITIAL CODING DEFINITIONS

These early renditions of *inter-rater codes* are quite different from those in the final code, revealing a glimpse into how the stage attribute dimensions evolved over time and became more inclusive of commonality. Please refer to p. 72 of this study for an overview of these definitional terms, used to help the interrater to more efficiently understand code criteria (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 31).

1. *Label:* Psychospiritual Path
Definition: Direct or indirect reference to recognizing, acknowledging or aligning with what is perceived to be one's unique and authentic destiny, journey, mission, assignment, task, purpose, or invitation in service of one's highest truth or capacities for enhanced awareness of one's individual calling.
Indicators: Mention of recognition of personal calling or invitation that is unique to that particular individual.
Exclusion: Life choices or responses to invitations that are not recognized to be allied with individual's highest calling to truth or awareness.
Differentiation: Not to be confused with an established psychospiritual tradition or lineage that individual is identified with and/or practicing within.
2. *Label:* Psychospiritual Practice
Definition: Any explicitly mentioned activity, skillful means, sadhana, technology, ritual, ceremony, exercise, etc. derived from a pre-established tradition in service of psychological and/or spiritual development.
Indicators: Reference to the prescribed or recommended techniques of a particular wisdom tradition.
Exclusion: Innate qualities, attitudes or capacities possessed by an individual.
Differentiation: Activities or disciplines motivated by or in service of goals that do not prioritize psychological or spiritual development.
3. *Label:* Direct Knowing
Definition: Experience of absolute certainty or unwavering clarity concerning veracity of information or authenticity of experience.
Indicators: Absolute and unwavering confidence in immediate or direct ascertainment of truth or legitimacy of insights or experiences.
Exclusion: Domains of understanding or experience that individual is not completely sure about.
Differentiation: Intuitions, hunches or insights that individual is still in process of clarifying, as opposed to complete and inviolable certainty in one's convictions.

4. *Label:* Prayer

Definition: Spoken or unspoken supplication, fervent request, reverent wish, earnest longing, or urgent entreaty to a transpersonal or divine source of blessing or support in service of psychological or spiritual development.

Indicators: Any explicit reference to beseeching a source of awareness that assumes or hopes for a responsive capacity.

Exclusion: Expressed desires or longings that are not relationally oriented or directed.

Differentiation: Praying to a higher power, awakened being or deity, as opposed to expressing a longing for something without expressing that preference in a relational or dialogic dynamic.

5. *Label:* Outer Guidance

Definition: Direction from teachers, masters, advisors, counselors, or role models that an individual perceives to have arisen from a nonegoic source of benevolent regard for the individual's psychospiritual development.

Indicators: Acknowledgment of authenticity of the guiding figure's actualization of their own inner guidance, which is identical to that which the individual seeks to attain for him or herself.

Exclusion: Guidance or counsel offered by figures that individual perceives to be as emanating from an egoic source that is informed, either consciously or not, by ignorance, preference, attachment, and/or selfish motivation.

Differentiation: Counsel from non-material beings, such spirits, deities, allies, etc., in contrast to figures in the imminent and manifest realm.

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FLIER

Dear Potential Study Participant,

Matt Spalding, Ed.M., a clinical psychology doctoral candidate at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, CA, under the supervision of his dissertation chair, Frank Echenhofer, Ph.D., is conducting a study on the lived experience of inner guidance in psychospiritual development.

If you are an experienced practitioner of *ayahuasca shamanism*, *Tibetan Buddhism*, *Jungian psychology* OR *the Diamond Approach/Diamond Logos teachings* AND have experienced some form of INNER GUIDANCE as a significant aspect of your psychological and spiritual development, please consider volunteering several minutes of your time to answer a brief questionnaire, either by email or phone, and a potential follow-up interview lasting about one hour regarding your experience.

This dissertation seeks to understand the variety and nuances of the lived experience of inner guidance, defined here as transpersonal sources of insight and support encountered through a variety of ancient and contemporary psychological and spiritual practices. While inner guidance has been the subject of extensive theoretical scholarship, there have been few systematic analyses or empirical studies of its diverse manifestations. A more refined understanding of the experiential dimensions of inner guidance will likely prove useful for adapting psychospiritual practices to our modern era, informing and enriching the field of transpersonal psychology in particular and spiritual and psychological health in general.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please be so kind as to contact Matt Spalding by either phone or email (contact information below) so as to receive a consent form and further details regarding this exploration.

Thank you very much for your time!

Sincerely,

Matt Spalding

email: spaldingmatthew@gmail.com
cell phone: 415-577-4441

APPENDIX E: SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this dissertation study exploring the lived experience of inner guidance across a variety of psychospiritual traditions. This study is loosely defining “inner guidance” as an internal or transpersonal source of support that provides one with insight or direction regarding one’s spiritual and psychological development.

“Please tell a story about a time in your life when you experienced some form of inner guidance that struck you as true and reliable and that had a profound impact upon you. Please be as specific and detailed as possible in your recollection of the event.”

In response to the above invitation, please send an email reply of roughly 250 words or less to spaldingmatthew@gmail.com.

APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

Matt Spalding, a clinical psychology doctoral candidate at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, CA, is conducting a study on the lived experience of inner guidance in psychospiritual development.

Participation involves an initial brief questionnaire that can be responded to either by email in approximately 250 words or less. You may be asked to participate in a 90 minute in-person interview following the screening questionnaire to share your inner guidance experiences in greater depth. No prior preparation on your part is required to respond to the questionnaire or potential follow-up interview, though participants who respond to the initial questionnaire are expected to consent to a follow-up interview should this be deemed beneficial to the study.

As such detailed and personal accounts of inner guidance are rarely discussed in psychological or spiritual research literature, your shared narratives will be of benefit to psychospiritual practitioners in particular and the fields of spiritual and psychological development in general. In addition to enriching the field of qualitative research, it is anticipated that this study will contribute to greater efficacy in understanding, recognizing, and facilitating inner guidance phenomena across psychospiritual traditions in contemporary clinical contexts. While it is hoped that you may find the questionnaire and interview processes engaging and thought-provoking, no direct benefit, either monetary or resulting from the experience itself, is offered or guaranteed.

Both the phone-based response option of the screening questionnaire and the potential ensuing in-person interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts will be shared with you and possibly one additional co-researcher as a validity and reliability check on Matt Spalding's analysis of the data to ensure that all identifying information will be removed. Once all identifying information has been removed from the transcripts, they will be included in the dissertation. Access to the audiotapes will be limited to Matt Spalding and a transcriber, if used, and all audiotapes will be destroyed within five years of collection. Neither your name, your city, your place of employment, nor any other identifying information will be included in the dissertation itself and all identifying data will be deleted when direct quotes are used in the dissertation. Your request to omit from the dissertation particular details that you specify to the researcher will be honored. Matt Spalding will also elicit from you other measures that you deem appropriate to further safeguard your confidentiality.

While the questionnaire and potential follow-up interview are not intended to evoke difficult experiences, they may touch upon sensitive areas for some people; some discomfort may arise from discussing certain

aspects of inner guidance experiences that might have been both personally and professionally challenging. You will be free to refuse to answer any question or to end your participation in the study at any time. Matt Spalding will be available before, during, or after the questionnaire and interviewing processes to talk about your concerns, and to facilitate referrals to supervisors, consultants, or therapists if such a need should arise. Matt Spalding can be contacted at (415). 577-4441 and his faculty chairperson, Dr. Frank Echenhofer, a licensed clinical psychologist and core PsyD faculty member at CIIS, can also be contacted at (510). 734-4358 should you require therapeutic services.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel that you have been placed at risk, you may report them -- anonymously, if you wish -- to the Chair, Human Research Review Committee, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, telephone (415). 575-6100.

If you agree to the above terms and conditions of this research study, please be so kind as to sign this form below and return it by mail in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Matt Spalding, 166 Gates St., San Francisco, CA, 94110. As mentioned above, if your initial questionnaire responses meet the criteria of select parameters of this dissertation study, you may be contacted for a follow-up interview.

I, _____, consent to participate in the study of inner guidance conducted by Matt Spalding of the California Institute of Integral Studies. I have received a copy of this Consent and Confidentiality Form, and I understand that my confidentiality will be protected within the limits of the law.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX G: CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Your privacy with respect to the information you disclose during participation in this study will be protected within the limits of the law. However, there are circumstances where a psychologist is required by law to reveal information, usually for the protection of a patient, research participant, or others. A report to the police department or to the appropriate protective agency is required in the following cases:

1. if, in the judgment of the psychologist, a patient or research participant becomes dangerous to himself or herself or others (or their property), and revealing the information is necessary to prevent the danger;
2. if there is suspected child abuse, in other words if a child under 16 has been a victim of a crime or neglect;
3. if there is suspected elder abuse, in other words if a woman or man age 60 or older has been victim of a crime or neglect. If a report is required, the psychologist should discuss its contents and possible consequences with the patient or research participant.

APPENDIX H: PARTICIPANT BILL OF RIGHTS

Bill Of Rights For Participants In Psychological Research

As a participant in psychological research, you have the right to . . .

- be treated with dignity and respect;
- be given a clear description of the purpose of the study and what is expected of you as a participant;
- be told of any benefits or risks to you that can be expected from participating in the study;
- know the research psychologist's training and experience;
- ask any questions you may have about the study;
- decide to participate or not without any pressure from the researcher or his or her assistants;
- have your privacy protected within the limits of the law;
- refuse to answer any research question or refuse to participate in any part of the study;
- withdraw from the study at any time without any negative effects to you;
- be given a description of the overall results of the study upon request;
- discuss any concerns or file a complaint about the study with the Human Research Review Committee, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA; telephone (415) 575-6114.

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Interview with Buddhist Practitioner # 1 [B1]

- MS: This can be a very casual conversation, though I have several questions that can provide us with some structure. My basic question is, "What has your lived experience of inner guidance been?" What has it been like and how does it make sense within your experience of the Vajrayana? And so my first specific question is, "How did you come to locate or identify this source or process of inner guidance in your life?" Whatever "inner guidance" means to you.
- B1: From the beginning, you wouldn't develop that inner guidance. How strong and how awakening that is, you know. As a child, when you grow up, you have a very subtle, very low level inner guidance that is telling you when to ask for some food. Or when to, all that very not sophisticated, that what you want, there's some uncomfortable, you cry for it. That's trying to get some guidance, you know, how that can affect your being. As you grow and go to school, and all those difficulties come. And you face, sometimes you broke that, you don't have enough inner guidance strong enough to truly penetrate, truly overcome, and truly feel inside the recognize that inner guidance. And that's the process of how one has this capability of seeing, recognizing. A lot of times our inner guidance goes for something that is very flickering, changing. And our inner guidance isn't so vast enough, so in depth or profound. So as you grow, and that's the process that each of us has that innately within our being. In a matter of time when we awaken ourselves. And for that reason due to our, that's why we, for human beings, there is the potential, a large, a very profound potential to truly recognize and to truly fathom and to truly go deeper into our own inner guidance, than speaking of animal beings that basically lack a lot of that inner guidance. So in this sense I feel very fortunate for meeting that inner guidance, getting so confidence in one's own inner guidance, that all come together just like in order for trees or plants to grow. Like fruitful and very rich and enriching and beautiful and everything, you need many conditions. You can't just put seeds somewhere and hope that they'll grow. But you need well fertile ground, manure, water, then heat, sun. And then, then everything grows together, is a very wonderful thing. And gives fruits, and everything comes very wonderful, miraculously. So it's the same. Our own innate nature encounters with very particular, precise and very well-met circumstances. In that I was fortunate, since being born in that spiritual community and having met these wonderful masters that

gave me an opportunity to reflect and grow and to directly see the inner guidance.

MS: Thank you. Do you remember times from your childhood, specific examples or instances when you first started to recognize that inner guidance or capacity?

B1: That's all, you know...Again, it's all circumstances where you are, you know, all the circumstances met. For me, when I was growing up, my family was all practitioners, spiritual practitioners. And they were always, you know, anything happens there was spiritual involvement. And for various kinds of sicknesses, physical sicknesses or torments and whatever happens, you immediately surrender to spiritual means. And that, you know, I have encountered many beings that are suffering, and with the presence of spirituality you can immediately see the lifting up of that very severe pain, severe tormentation. And seeing that joy. And that's common encounter as I grew up. And a lot of people, a lot of practitioners that are going through immeasurable pain, yet you see they're really happy. Not disturbed by that. Seeing that every day, day in, day out, every time you see, and you know, seeing all those effects of spiritual, and my own father who happened to be a master, seeing him going through all these sicknesses, and time of death, and that leaves you a big impression in your being. And as time, you know, there's a sense of wondering, there's always a sense of why this is so, that some people can't overcome such suffering. You can see all over the world people having so much suffering. And some people can overcome and be very happy. Why is such? And why, you know, everybody has to die and go through all this suffering? That is a question mark as a kid that comes up all the time. And you go to sleep, you tend to reflect on those. And that makes a, you know...A lot of time here, what we call a god-like realm, where people have everything. Like, food, or anything that happens you can entertain yourself, forget yourself, and you feel like you're floating up in the air. Everything works well. Physically you can, anything that happens you can go to the doctor and it finishes. You have no kind of fear for long periods of time. And at the end, you know, you have so much anxiety, so much fear, being left completely left out and tormented deeply inside. And you know, that's for us, for me, it is like encounter from the very beginning. Seeing everything as it is.

MS: This is your experience from the very beginning.

B1: Very beginning. It is a part of...And you tend to realize, and there's a sense of what would I want to do? As I grew up, you know, as a young kid, you wanted to think about your life. What is the most important thing? And that makes a great impact in my, you know, journey in the spiritual quest. And seeing, you know...Then, you

know, like coming up with masters, we have many great masters around that we can go and, especially seeing my own teacher, looking at my teacher, what he's been doing the whole of his life, and that there is no question. You don't, you know, I don't feel like any doubt. His selfless activity that's been, and you know, eventually that leaves you a deep investigation into oneself, what I want to do now. And having seen and under his guidance I feel, you know, really complete joy and openness. And that led me into spiritual practice.

MS: Was there ever any indecision or confusion as to what your inner guide was trying to do?

B1: There's always some kind of intrigue in life, you know. Like you have people or your friends or your family or circumstances. For me, growing up, going into this college where education and recognition and status and way of living is a very strong requirement. And I've studied, I'm not saying this is really bad or anything, it just gave me another perspective. And then again, in going into retreat, there's a sense of, in the world we have to raise our own recognition, worldly recognition. A degree, this and that, work and everything. And I've, you know, one point meeting with my teacher, it, whole, everything completely opened up and I decided to go into retreat, into spiritual practice. And a lot of my friends have said, this isn't the right time. You have to first, you can study, you can go deeper into study and degrees, getting degrees, recognition. And then you'll have time to meditate. And that's my own inner guidance saying, "What do I do if I have that degree? What *will* I do? What am I going to do with that degree?" And I had to decide myself. I had to reflect on that. Suppose I have degree now, now what would I want to do? And that made my decision. Right, I'm not going to listen to anyone. But that complete doubt is completely severed. And I want to pursue this no matter what.

MS: Because when you asked yourself, "What will I do with this degree?," the answer was not satisfying?

B1: Not satisfying.

MS: And then you met with your teacher at that point. And was it because of your teacher's explicit guidance?

B1: Yes, yes.

MS: Or because in his presence it felt very clear...

B1: There's the combination, combination.

MS: Will you say more about that combination?

B1: You know, like, I've been from a young age that's influenced, been innately in my being. And seeing master that has so much impression. His presence, his awareness, his guidance. There's no, you know...I can evaluate, this is what we all evaluate things. Like who is better, what is, how I can get something out of it. That's the human nature of thinking. What is better and what is not good. All of that. But a lot of times we go, you know, once I completely, shutting off others. But here, not just someone is famous or someone is well-known by other, but what that, whoever that is, is doing that gives impression to me. And that, you know, leaves a very strong impression in my being, that connected, connected to. I realized that this is my teacher that can truly, like you know, untie my doubt, my...Awaken my own being. And after seeing that I cannot wait. And meeting with him awakened, it awakened me. And from then on I pursued whatever instruction he's given. Went into retreat, practiced. And now I can, when I look back, I have no regret. And I'm very happy. More happy than ever. So that is the outcome of that. And I'm not, have any doubt whatsoever.

MS: Did you ever have doubt?

B1: I did have. As a young kid, you know...What if this is not right? Or what if that...All that doubt. And if you look at, you know, being completely, you know, I overcome that doubt, so to speak. Otherwise I would be a doubter and being in doubt all the time. And never get out of that doubt. Because doubt comes one after another. So you will have always doubt. You cannot foresee or cannot penetrate that doubt.

MS: And so the way that you overcame that doubt is that the impression of certain people in your life, certain masters, especially your root teacher...

B1: My root teacher.

MS: That impression was deeper than other impressions.

B1: Yes.

MS: Or was clearer.

B1: Clearer. It's completely cast out that doubt and now I feel really doubt-free.

MS: Can you describe the experience of that awakening which dispelled all the doubt?

B1: This has to do, not just like you feel, “OK after this practice or thing it’s clear.” Actually it is not just like that. It is a long process of all the practice that I’ve done that emphasized on your mind that creates doubt and hesitation and all that anxiety. Everything. So you know, like the practice of this whole thing is to work on your mind, which is the creator of everything that, happiness, joy, suffering, sadness, anxiety, everything comes with that. And from the very beginning of all the, in the beginning relating to your physical action that comes, that creates all this thing. Like if you’re doing a job or you have some, or you have something to do and some difficulties come up, then that becomes the source of all this anxiety or discomfort coming from that, you see. Or regarding a relation, or anything that comes up. First it comes up a very physical thing. Then that physical, you know, aggravates the mental nature. And then the doubt becomes broader when you don’t, you become completely obsessed with that and it creates more solid and you cannot get away from it. So, you know, there Rinpoche’s practice was more in the beginning, so much like physical work. You know, for example, for Rinpoche, it’s not like free, get teaching and then go home. There is a lot of work. He emphasizes doing something that’s good for all of us. Like when I was in retreat, like building your own water mill to make your own food. Every day after we had a session meditating, go out, work. And all that, kind of like, means to let go, let go of all the fixed idea.

MS: And to recondition.

B1: Yes. And like every single thing involves the means of guru. When you look back right now, that’s skillful means. And with that conditions, that is very important, I felt, that can, how do you say, awaken your mind.

MS: So one of my questions, and you might have answered this, is has inner guidance taken different ways or different forms of revealing itself in your life?

B1: Of course. Everything in different forms. Now when you look, that inner guidance now is such that you have complete trust, in yourself. Completely trust because of complete trust in the guru you’ve found out your own trust. And that trust is the basis of devotion. Then you, that guide that shows, it’s not just like happy, jolly kind of experiences. Looking around it’s very raw, rugged experiences that you see. And that, people, with that raw, rugged, whatever experiences that in samsara, you see these people being completely overwhelmed and tormented. There’s a sense of compassion, you know, unfabricated compassion. What can I do? Not like...It’s unfabricated compassion. And the determination, until complete enlightenment.

MS: So you're saying it can take the form of devotion, it can take the form of persistence and commitment, dedication...But depending on the circumstance, the inner guidance will have a different flavor or different way of responding to reality.

B1: Yes. From a very low level, our everyday life situation. Like, if you, inner guidance is always, you know, once you become completely trusting in yourself, then every situation, like, say you have a physical break down. Or for yourself, sometimes your family member or very close friends get sick, it is worse than yourself. Or sometimes you have a very unexpected thing come up, you complete break down. So this inner guidance is such a strong conviction that that will never happen. You know, from low level. Or like panicking in some situation, from food, from health, all the things that come up in everyday life. That our inner guidance becomes very strong. Very, *very* strong. Irreversible. Of course you will feel pain, suffering, emotions, as long as you have this body and mind. But that emotions have no impact. It, see through emotion, or it vanishes just like mist. Clearing itself in the sky. Because that deep conviction is such that it can't have a solid existence.

MS: And is this deep conviction the inner guru?

B1: Yes.

MS: Because one thing I'm interested in is that all of us have this same capacity for inner guidance, but these different traditions speak of it with different language and with different cultural manifestations.

B1: Yes, yes.

MS: And in Buddhism there seem to be the inner guru, which you've been discussing, it feels like, and also different messengers, like dakinis, that can *bring* guidance.

B1: Yes.

MS: But these are different, yeah? The inner guru and the guidance bringers?

B1: That's a reflection of inner guru.

MS: Which is? I'm sorry, which is a reflection?

B1: Whichever manifestation it takes. If that is not the case then it's completely different. For instance, for Buddhists, Buddha, the absolute Buddha, is not the form. The form it carries because

Buddha has compassion. The compassion carries the form to deliver that in order to manifest. And if you don't see that then you have this one particular amazement of seeing Buddha, very luminous light being coming into you, giving you so much impression. You feel, like, Wow! That Wow! comes and disappears, it doesn't stick there. It's the same, like, for God. You feel like, God, this miracle, came into our being and there is Jesus coming to me and light radiating, touch me. And you feel amazed, elated, and you feel completely overwhelmed, completely in awe. And you have amazement. But that [laughs] amazement is just a figure. It comes and then goes. And then you talk about it. You go, "Oh, I had that wonderful experience." Yeah, trying to hold onto it. It's just experience. And you're just trying to bring back that experience. Just like whenever you have difficulty you just think about it and just experience that experience. That experience comes and goes. It's finished. You didn't see the awakening of your own guru, but as an external thing. So there is no connection. So there is no awakening.

MS: As long as we keep that experience as an eternal, dual experience, it doesn't lead to awakening.

B1: There is no awakening. You always crave for something. And there's no complete awakening.

MS: And so the best way to make use of these experiences is...

B1: As a manifestation. The deeper your conviction manifests, the stronger the impression manifests. And the more confidence it generates. The unity, the unity of Buddha with your own being. There is joy, inexpressible joy. Not just that very, you know, external amazement and joy. But very vast, inexpressible joy. That leads your mind awakening more strong conviction that Buddha is never separated from your being, your own guru. Then, you know, there is a conviction, whatever things come is a manifestation of Buddha. You have no doubt about that. Hesitation, doubt, all clears.

MS: So originally we might need very powerful or magical-seeming or impressive manifestations to awaken this. But eventually *everything* is an experience for awakening that conviction. There's no special or not-special anymore.

B1: Everything becomes special in that sense. Because sickness becomes special if one becomes stronger and stronger. Sickness becomes awakening. Right now we are afraid of sickness. We're trying to avoid the sickness and trying to hope for better health and good being, well-being, everything. As long as we have that then there is good and bad and there is all these experiences, very...

- MS:* So sometimes, let's say these dakinis, or certain messengers of compassion that are ripe for us to recognize, they will come in a benevolent inspiring form. But you're saying, just as often, if we can recognize with proper vision, even wrathful messengers might be necessary for us to recognize the inner guru.
- B1:* Yes. Then you have nowhere, you have, any kind of circumstances are awakening. Any kind of conditions are awakening. Then you are very close to Buddha. You are very close to God, or whatever, you name it. If that's what God is, then everyone is same, the same page. If one is into that outer thing than that's a different thing. That's a different thing, a completely different thing.
- MS:* Thank you. I guess I'm wondering, part of my focus in my dissertation is, how we as practitioners can discern or differentiate between authentic inner guidance and false. And sort of wondering how we can best discriminate this in regards to trusting guidance from others or trusting our inner guidance. How do we know when to trust or when to be cautious?
- B1:* This is such a big, because our habit, like I've said, whether this is true or not true, whether I can trust or not trust. Down from the very beginning we have that insecurity in ourselves. And that causes very major part in our inability to truly have a trust. And now having said that, you know, it's all about our own, as I've said before, like having all conditions together. Because that is very, very important. Because we are in this environment that creates a lot of doubt, you see. Now, in order for that to completely transcend from that, we need to have very flexible, very spacious, open aspect. Like when we have... Suppose if I trust you and in some way my trust becomes kind of shaky. Now you have to look at it. Is it going rough ride, and you feel like, "I don't know about that"? But as we do, trying to hold onto that, about that all the time. But in fact, what we have to do is recognize, "OK, this is coming up. This is untrustworthy or very shaky things coming up. I realize this." Is this pursuing that over and over again, or is it going in that direction? Then you have to look at it. "OK, this is awakening. To me it is awakening. I need something else. This trust is not going right." But very nicely, disconnecting whoever you have put a trust on. It's not a personal that you are putting trust, you're just putting so much emphasis on a person that is outside rather than your own unshaky, rather than your own very shaky trust, you see? We have emphasized on the outer, external trust too strong, that there is no place for inner trust to manifest. Because we trust on that particular form. Now, if that generating very shaky, you have to realize this is awakening. Awakening, where can I put a trust on? Whom to have to put a trust on? Then you have more options. There are many forms, teachers that can, that you have a connection to. But as long

as the question is, as long as you have the concept of putting external trust, then there is always going to have a problem. There's always going to have a problem. Because what we can perceive as a human being, and through eyes and through our own habits, something that we like that person won't deliver, then you have like, "What did I do that he didn't like?" Or, "What I did I do that my teacher didn't respond to it? What did I do that I have this or that coming out? What did I do...?" There's so many things come up, because here's not so stable. And then you focus too much on the external form. Then there's no chance of awakening your own trust. Not only that, then you will go for another one, have the same thing, another one, have the same thing. You'll have the problem over and over again. Now, here in Vajrayana it's all about awakening one's own true nature. The skillful means of, "OK, without guru you cannot yourself do anything." So guru is the one that delivers, that awakens you. So in that sense, if you cannot imagine your guru as an enlightened being, how about imagine your guru as Padmasambhava or Buddha that you fancy? That you fancy that it is complete, like nonhuman. It's complete, like, so that very focus of the external grasping of some particular human being that you see fault. Then you can embrace that. Once you embrace the enlightened Buddha, then, "OK that I'm fancying, that I'm imagining. It doesn't do, it's just fancy. But here my guru is giving me all this instruction." And then your really deep down inside you see you have a strongly, there is no way you can not have that faith and trust that guru is awakening in me. And this, whatever is, it's my time now to look in and truly see. Then you have a really strong conviction, trust.

MS: So I'm wondering in the west, a lot of us, we don't know how to recognize or how to trust when that awakening happens. So the basic purpose of this dissertation is to help future practitioners trust more in authentic awakening experiences. Not just as experiences, but as a path. So this feels like more what my ego wants, more of a habit, but that's not the real inner guru. How do we as westerners, who maybe have not grown up in a spiritual container, how might we recognize when a true awakening happens with a certain teacher? Like you said, in the west here we have many different teachers, many different flavors, many different traditions even. We might be inspired by one that might come and go. How might we recognize when the inspiration is true for us, is the right fit at the right time for us?

B1: This is kind of like difficult here. This is the habit we built up. We have everything here. From a young age, toys. And the parents go, "You don't want this? OK, I'll get this one." There are so many options.

MS: We're used to switching channels.

- B1: Yeah, kids just...And then you don't feel good, someone's not patting you, then it's like, "I don't want that, I want another one." So that's a habit built. And now...
- MS: A quick fix.
- B1: Yeah. So then that habit has become very strong. It becomes very hard to break down that habit. And again, you know, a lot teachers come up here, they don't want to...A lot of time teachers they pat the student, "Oh, you're feeling really bad, how are you? You're OK." All that. And it's just, it doesn't really make any good.
- MS: It's baby sitting. [laughs]
- B1: Baby sitting. And that is what it is. It's happening like that. And it's not just teachers trying to sell the thing, but this is what it is. The situation's like this.
- MS: To connect, maybe I have to baby sit.
- B1: Baby sit. So, you know, here it is very important, it is very important, once you...Maybe for some it is like changing things. They want to do this, and it's not so good. I'll go another one and then another one, another one. Maybe you have a medley of all the information, knowledge, or this tradition does this and this is about that, and this tradition does this and this is about that. Which is good. I mean, you know the whole information. What it doesn't do, anything, you know, your own, is it doesn't hit in your being. It doesn't make any difference. You just have a knowledge of something, but it doesn't do anything for your *own*, you know, recognition of your own true guidance within yourself. Because then, you know, having said that, your habit will go after, run around, you know.
- MS: So let's say if we were use the metaphor of ice cream. We want a little sample of each, just so I don't miss out on anything, so I have just the right and best flavor for me. When we come to the right taste, how do we know if it's the right flavor for us to commit to so as to stop the anxiety of wanting to have it all, and as you say, keep it mental, but not having it open the heart? How do we know when the right favor presents itself?
- B1: Like I said, it's timing. That, what we call in Buddhism, it's called karma, you see. Karma is like what you have built, what you have accustomed to. Just like why we're here, you know, we are accustomed to this and that. And you feel, "Maybe I'm going to stick with this." You know, that's your own karma that your whole being, your whole existence, is accustomed with. And you know,

most importantly, not being stuck with that, but have a spacious, open. And in order to do that, OK, you are experiencing ice cream, OK. The flavor comes and goes. And you're having, enjoying the flavor. If you're too concerned about the flavor you eat too much and you have a pain in your stomach and you feel disgusted, not so delicious anymore. You overate, you just feel like I shouldn't have had, it's too much. The sweetness doesn't do any good, you see. Now the important thing is like, if you know this is something that is very interesting, very good and delicious, I can have a couple of bites. And OK, this is really good, not being completely overwhelmed by it, but to see, I can experience this. And then there's a joy of having that. At the same time, you have open space. You know, your whole thing feels good. And then, maybe you have that and not being overwhelmed having that, and then something different comes. This is really good, you know, why try this, why not try this? Then you feel, "Well OK, I've had this for a while and this is really good." And you're not so overwhelmed, going crazy about that. Not having that completely meltdown like kids, you know. They see ice cream, they don't get it, they just cry on the ground and scream and everything. But you know, have a little bit and then you observe your experience. And if it gives you some sense of satisfaction, you know, maybe this is not so, I can go something different. Then you have space, because you're not just into that particular thing. You experience that, you enjoy that, yet you're not crazy about it. Then you have that space there. And if there's something hype, or you see things different, and you know, there's the look of ice cream or the hype or the people talking about the benefit of ice cream, how it is made and what it will do. You see the ingredients and everything, then you, "Ah, I can just taste a little bit." Then you taste that and you feel, "Oh, I think this a bit better than the other one." Again you taste it and not being, then there's space for you to grow rather than being completely stuck and completely overwhelmed. So in that way, know now what ice cream is. What it does. You know, this is an example, you know, oh ice cream tastes really good but it's not so good for you. You know that, right. Oh ice cream, it's just a little treat, but it's not good for you. It makes you, this whole idea of ice cream, it's just an example of that. But regarding guidance, you know, it's like this whole thing is a process. Spiritual process. If you have the space there's things to grow. If you don't have the space you're very confined in one particular idea and that particular idea mostly about external things, you know. What we can find ourselves is category and particular external things that you like or you don't like. There is no space. OK, this is what it is. I'm going to go this and I don't care what other is. And if such is the thing then there's no space. And then you have to stick with it, and if you're happy with it then that's fine. But mostly when it's about external things then there's a lot of uncertainty. With that uncertainty then it's really a roller

coaster. It doesn't give you strong inner guidance, then you feel like up and down.

MS: So as a sign of our conviction, not in the form, but in the inner, whether it be the inner guru or the inner trust, how do we know when it's authentic? Are there certain signs, whether it be increased compassion or increased trust? How do we recognize when we're in touch with the true...

B1: First it comes in the external thing, OK? Once seeing one's, you know, like having had the connection you feel different. You feel different, really different. Just seeing, just doing, just contact, you feel really *moved* and hard to express. It's just being there gives you some sense of warmth, some sense of joy, that it cannot...It's not like something that you ate or something that you, but there's the sense of something with joy in it. Then, you know, it grows, not just stuck in one particular station. The more you practice the more you, there's a sense of really like, and recognizing, there's the sense that, it's important to have that space. Because otherwise you have that experience in the beginning and you're stuck with that experience and you feel that now I'm not getting that anymore, there's something wrong. Then there's the sense that it's not...Yes, we had the sense of a very strong connection, but then the same habit comes grabbing onto that experience. And now you expect more of that. And there's no more of that particular thing and you get like, "I don't get that anymore, is there something wrong?" Then all this hesitation doubt comes. And for this, you know, it's really important to try to cast aside the doubt built up, you know that space. And everything as a manifestation to awaken one's mind and build up that strong connection. And then most importantly, you know, like practicing. Meditation. And in the beginning it is important to have that very grounded, solid, external experience. I'm not saying that the external experience is not worth anything. But of course this is a stepping stone.

MS: For inspiration.

B1: Yes. But then not being stuck with it. And to, you know, like grow from then on. Then there is even more options, more space. Then the conviction grows rather than very flickering. You become very strong and then joy in no matter what happens. There's sense of strong conviction.

MS: So when there's increased spaciousness, warmth, joy, conviction, it's probably the real thing.

B1: Yeah. And discipline.

MS: It should encourage discipline.

B1: So that you don't get too carried away with things. Discipline. Discipline oneself, OK? This is what I'm going to do. Otherwise we become very wishy-washy. You know, sometimes I like that thing...And then we expect more. It doesn't match, you want some kind of thing but then you don't really do. So discipline is the very important thing here. And once you have the discipline and not being distracted with things. And just keep doing, without having any expectation. But a lot of times we expect a lot and that expectation is a distraction. You just feel over and over again but actually not doing anything but just to think about something. So concentration, just concentrate on, have discipline and concentrate, meditate. That's all it takes. When you do that then your mind naturally, there's, always, no matter, a small heat, if persistent, you keep on that small heat, slowly it can catch on to a huge heat. But if you don't and the heat is there and you go like this all the time [moving imaginary flame around] then it's never going to catch heat. So it's important to have discipline, concentration, meditate. And have a very spacious, open space. Trust, devotion. And seeing as it is, that very important. You feel when you have this body, there's pain and aches. And all this emotional stuff comes and all this discomfort comes. Everything as an awakening rather than trying to get away, trying to discard, trying to put an end to external effort. So then as you grow, then the inner strength manifests. That's natural.

MS: Thank you. I think you've just talked about this, but I was wondering if there's been a developmental aspect to your inner guidance in regards to trust. Kinds of information, how the information appears. Has it developed in your life, from a small flame to a very large one? Or, when you were young and you got in touch with that guidance, that inner guru, has it been the same experience?

B1: There's the experiences that I've felt as young, it's just reassured right now. The kind of experience that I had like when you look at this moment, really reassured myself. That is very amazing. But that's just an experience. And with that continued practice transcends my experiences and becomes a really strong conviction in the practice.

MS: So that conviction strengthens with every consistent experience.

B1: Yes.

MS: When you speak of your master, you are referring to [name] Rinpoche?

B1: Yes, yes.

- MS:* Have you ever found, I guess I'm curious, in terms of your inner guidance and the external guidance. And I know you've said it's always the combination of the two, right?
- B1:* Yes.
- MS:* And that the inner guidance is strengthened by recognizing the, having the trust in the external source. Have you ever found the two in tension or disagreement? Have you ever found your internal guidance saying something different than the external guidance of, let's say, your root teacher? And what do you do when you feel there's a difference there? If you feel there is ever a difference there? Or maybe that doesn't happen?
- B1:* For me, I don't see in that, I don't perceive in that, you know. The thing is that if it's mundane level, whatever mundane level, then if there is something that I feel hard to cope with, hard to penetrate through, then I ask my guru if he's there. If not, then I pray. With visualizing, with fervent devotion. Then, you know, it makes, it just makes my, all the doubt clear. Then that is the external level. The internal level is I don't have any doubt. I don't have any doubt. So with that doubtless I rest.
- MS:* Have you ever had any doubt on that internal level? And if so, how did you work with that doubt?
- B1:* That, you know, it's important, just like how you try and figure out where the doubt lies. Where the doubt lies. Is it inside or outside? In this body, outside the body? What form? And I cannot find anywhere.
- MS:* I see. So on the external mundane level, when you find a difference between what your inner guidance might be speaking towards and the external authority of your teacher, you just assume that it is your responsibility to tune into your teacher's perspective?
- B1:* Or you feel, this is, I can do it, I can do it myself. Whatever you, you know, mundane level, if there are some difficulties, I know I can do this. If I cannot do this and have problem, then I ask. If not, this is mundane level, this is fine with me.
- MS:* Have you and your teacher ever disagreed about something?
- B1:* No. Not at all. Not at all. Because, you know, one thing for me, like, my teacher is complete. There's no...And I know, I have some, staying in retreat and my physical wasn't so good. And he knew that, without, I hadn't to say anything. That he's telling me, "OK, you're staying in the monastery. You don't have to go to the pujas

and everything. General things, you don't have to do anything. When some special thing comes I want you to lead the like, whole thing. And when the retreatants need instruction, I want you to go give the instructions. That's it." And I'm happy with that. More than happy with that. So there's no, not even one... And you know, Rinpoche's action, you look at it, even single moment, there is no, like... Our habit is like there's a selfish motive, you feel like, is this, a lot of times you feel there's a selfish motive. I don't see *any* selfish motive with Rinpoche. Sitting, just sitting was like, you see this selflessness. That's the most impression I get from Rinpoche. That's my experience. [laughs] Yeah. Then?

MS: Well, this is similar to the developmental aspect, but does the strength or presence of your inner guidance vary or differ over time or is it constant?

B1: That depends on oneself. That all depends on oneself. But the thing of a great master like Rinpoche, even if you're down you go in front of him, everything is gone. That is the quality. And you see that. And then, this is like refreshing. You go there and everything's refreshed again. And that's why for individuals who are in the, young, novice practitioner, it is important to have the connection with the true guru that can rejuvenate practice. And I was fortunate to have that. And, you know, of course our circumstances, physical, emotional, mental things come up. And sometimes you feel really good, other times you don't feel good. Sometimes you have so much trust and faith you cry. Tears roll. Other times you feel, "I don't know now, I don't see Rinpoche very much and I have all these difficulties, you know. My health is not good, or emotions come in or physical situation, health situation." And, you know, financial situation. Everything comes up. Or people not so nice. Or all those things come up and it shakes you, right? It just makes you kind of like really down, emotional. And at that time it's very important just to, if you are able to go to see your guru. If not, visualize being in the presence of your guru. And then pray for, with fervent devotion pray. And then guru's compassion is inconceivable. Seeing your own experiences, guru melts into lights and touches your whole being. You feel the whole presence of guru, and guru's mind and your mind become inseparable. And then you rest. Then it clears away all the... Just like, you have a deep breath, sigh. It's just like a huge relief. And not just attached to that relief, but that spaciousness reveals when you're not attached to that. Just relief. Then it's just relief and you're obsessed with that relief. But rather, when there's a big relief, at the same time mind opens. When mind opens you rest, being with the nature of guru. Then the true blessing. Then it gives you strong impression in your being. Conviction. There's strong, practice is being formulated in your being. Then you build on that, any given time. That is meditation. OK? Anything else?

MS: A couple more. This might not be relevant, but one of my questions is how you respond to those times when inner guidance is less available, or when you feel it's not there?

B1: It's always there.

MS: Always there. And to rejuvenate, you do what you just said.

B1: Yeah. That's how you rejuvenate. It's always there. It's just a matter of you don't feel like, you will say like, "The sun is always there, but the cloud comes you feel like it's not there, but it's always there."

MS: And we can meditate upon the sun when the clouds are there, and that dissolves the clouds.

B1: Yes. So, you know, it's just like our own kind of clumsiness and being ignorant. The metaphor of being ignorant and clumsiness, so you see the cloud. It's just, so maybe emotions, negativity, surrounded that you don't really have, you can't really think about anything else but that experience. And when you let go of that experience, you just see through that experience. Then the sun is there, your inner guru's there.

MS: I'm curious also, Rinpoche, how...And like all these questions, of course, if it's not appropriate I understand. But how does your inner guidance help you in knowing how to prioritize or decide upon, to begin or finish, certain specific practices for yourself or your students? In terms of deciding when it is time to begin to begin or finish a specific form of practice, a certain sadhana, or set of teachings?

B1: That all depends. Like, you know, in the olden times, you know, Buddha, during the time of Buddha and great siddha, they know individual's mind. And according to them they just gave teachings right away and it's very effective. And not only that. Nowadays, you know, we all beings become really too many intellectual, too many thinking, doubt. And for that, not only that, and then great masters have come up with these new means, so it covers every single thing, regardless of you know, individual's capability. A set of very, our habit is like that, we need the structure. You know, like, in olden time this master who just wanted to sleep. And he was so sleepy that his master gave him how to meditate when just asleep. Now in these times there's no, due to that degenerate trust, you know, there's one particular teaching like that will not have a huge impact. And that may not be suffice. And with this practice, set of practices, will cover if anything left. To have a certain structure so that individual of all the capabilities, of all practitioners

can benefit. Not only benefit, but really be effective. So the structure of this giving teachings, basic teachings, preliminary teachings, and the main teachings. Then how to like completely, how to complete the teaching practice. How to complete the practice and all these things, like you know, structure, giving empowerment to ripen student's mind. Then give instruction on levels, slowly bring them on different levels, spiritual level, more effective. That's why, and also, depending on student's, that is why it is important to know your teacher and student relation, so the teacher knows student, student knows teacher, so there is a bond, connection. And according to that, giving, the teacher knows the student's, what type the student is. And student has strong connection to teacher. With that then giving instruction and depending on what will work. Slowly, not hurriedly. There is no hurried teachings and the whole practice cannot help. So in that way, then the teachings, the process of teacher student and meditation manifests.

- MS:* Thank you, Rinpoche. And for yourself, now that you are, when apart from your root teacher, in deciding for yourself what practices are most appropriate, how do you decide upon that?
- B1:* That, you know, again, you have all the practice. Then all the practice has to come into one.
- MS:* Well, for example, I have [a teacher] in my life, who I consider to be enlightened. So if I'm in question, which I have been many times, about which is a right practice for me, I can ask [him]. If I did not have access to [him], how would I rely upon my inner guidance to choose what forms of practice might be most appropriate for me? And I'm not, of course, I'm very unstable. [laughs] But let's say for you, for someone who is realized and whose inner guidance does not waver, how do you decide in time and place, in the relative mundane world, what forms of practice are most right for you and most relevant? And maybe that's not a relevant question and doesn't apply...
- B1:* That comes, that is, once you go through the practice, then you will know. You will know.
- MS:* And how do you know? [laughs] It's part of my interest. How does that knowledge...
- B1:* Practice is same. All the practices are the same. And what kind of practice you do, you feel connected to. You are connected to. Your teacher gives you and you feel connected to.
- MS:* So there's a feeling of connection. And can you describe that experience of connection? Is it the same quality you mentioned before? The spaciousness, the warmth, the joy?

- B1: And not only that, you feel connection. You're not going for that external connection, but that practice encompasses all, all the practice. Not just a particular thing. Again, we're thinking of that practice as one external thing. Yeah. There's that. But that external thing, you're not grabbing onto that one external thing. But that particular external thing opens up.
- MS: It's just the door. And inside that door, it's...
- B1: It's spacious. That's the means. What means do you, that affect you, that you are very connected to, differs.
- MS: And so the key is to pay attention to what connection *feels* like it opens the door most easily for us.
- B1: Yes.
- MS: Thank you. I just have a couple of more questions. [laughs] Are you in a place in your life right now where you're trying to make any large decisions? Maybe an example of a decision you might be making, or a certain circumstance where you're relying upon your inner guidance to try to make any larger decisions?
- B1: This is not like making a decision or anything. It is like a way of living. And if you live now very openly, spaciously, and trying to practice, then whatever comes, I'm not *after* anything. If I'm after something then there's a problem, I'm in trouble. Because I'm craving for something. I'm not craving for something, anything. But I'm practicing, embarking upon the spiritual path. And there is an openness, there is a space, whatever comes, as a practice. As an awakening. And that awakening has a compassion. That compassion, whatever compassion manifests and forms, is also awakening. So, you know, in that sense, I don't, there is not any kind of agenda, per se. And there is, what do you call...the word for that...*Ironically*, you know, I said there is no agenda for any particular, but compassion itself is an agenda. Like it can take forms in different ways, but whatever it takes. And until the complete enlightenment, we have to build on our spiritual recognition, realization. And benefit beings as much as it allows it manifest. In that sense, we have to build our brightness of sun. And then with the sun, the heat touches ground, ocean, and forms a cloud. And from the cloud the rain downpours and helps all animate and inanimate beings. But the sun doesn't have a particular intention, "Oh, I want to help this part, I don't want to help the other part." But the sun's rays, compassion, heat, wherever there is, unintentionally benefit. So it is important to grow that very brightness of sun like that in the nature of, enlightened nature. And grows vast, profound, until complete enlightenment. That is the

sun-like nature. So that's an agenda, you can say. That's an agenda. It doesn't matter. The word doesn't make any...

MS: To shine without discrimination is a very spacious agenda. [laughs] I have one final question. Did you notice at any time in this interview that some form of inner guidance was operating? Meaning, have you drawn at any time upon your sources of guidance for this interview?

B1: Yes, it is. Now, you came, you came here to ask me about everything, that there's any kind of like insight that manifests with this conversation. And there's manifestation of inner guidance. That's a form of inner guidance that manifests so that you understood what I said. And from my, it manifests from my being. And it manifests into word, and just made you understand into your ear and touches your whole being. And that's a form of inner guidance that takes form.

MS: And a related question is, if you make use of a certain strategy for inner guidance, could I invite you to use it now to answer my question of what *is* inner guidance? If you were to try to define inner guidance from your own experience at the end of our conversation, since you've been drawing upon it, what is inner guidance from that space?

B1: There's a saying. In the space, the wind depends on space. On the wind, water. On the water, earth. And the fire. All depend on that. It's not the other way around. And on what does this space depend? Where is the space? Space is openness. You cannot express the space. But without space there is not all of this manifestation. And you speak about inner guidance. Whatever has benefited, you said that that is inner guidance. You could say whatever comes up with insight, wisdom comes up. But what is wisdom, actually? There's no stress. There's no form. It's spacious. That's what dharmata is. That's the miracle of manifestation. That's the true inner guidance. Very spacious. Spacious like sky. Clear like sun. That is it.

Interview with Buddhist Practitioner # 2 [B2]

- MS: My general, overarching interest is in your lived experience of what I'm calling "inner guidance." Whatever "inner guidance" is for you. I don't have any fixed notion of that. A lot of people have written about this phenomenon in the spiritual literature, but not a lot of people have talked about what it's like for them as individuals, especially within their own tradition of practice. So I'm interested in your own lived experience of inner guidance, but also within the context of the Vajrayana. So that's my general inquiry. Though my first specific question is, how did you first come to locate or identify this source or process of what I'm calling inner guidance? What was your first experience of identifying or recognizing this?
- B2: Yes. [Closes eyes and pauses for 30 seconds while chimes sound in garden.] To me, the inner guidance is an expression of primordial intelligence, which lies within each of us. No matter who you are, we all possess this innate gift, this primordial intelligence or primordial wisdom, which leads us to make the right decisions in our life and ultimately leads us to the great awakening, the enlightenment. Of course, most of the time we don't know how to have access to being in touch with inner guidance. Once we know how to open the door and to shake hands with our inner guidance, that does not mean we always listen to it. [laughs] We don't listen to it. The inner guidance tells us to go the east and somehow the ego is pulling ourselves to the wrong direction, to the west. So there is always battle between our inner guidance and our ego or our ignorance, our delusion, our tendencies of making constant errors or mistakes in our life. So this has to do with also really trusting in ourselves. And many people don't trust in themselves. Rather, they rather entrust words of other people. They don't trust themselves due to lack of self-respect. And also it has to do with ultimately not really realizing who we are, our true nature. In that sense, we see the societies are so much filled with counselors, therapists, spiritual advisors, people always searching for advisors. People even calling other people on the radio or TV. Or making personal consultations to find out which is the way to go, which is the best decisions, because they don't trust in their inner guidance. In my experience as a human being, I remember that I am very much capable of always reaching the presence of the inner guidance. But now and then I used to ignore the message of inner guidance, or perhaps my habits and my propensities were not very much responding to the messages of inner guidance. Perhaps my inner guidance would tell me to stop watching TV, [laughs] whereas perhaps my conditioned self wants to watch TV, because

perhaps a part of my conditioned self is addicted to watching TV. This is of course a simple example, but you can apply this example to different areas of your life. And so, to me as a Vajrayana practitioner, when you say inner guidance I believe it has to do with the intelligence, the primordial intelligence, which is Tathagatagarbha, which is your Buddha nature. Also, there is this fundamental premise in Vajrayana that the Buddha resides within you. Guru resides within you. Usually the guru, in eastern cultures, especially Indian and Tibetan cultures, is somebody who will tell you everything, and knows exactly what you should do, and will basically guide you and accompany you, and who will hold your hand and lead you to the right destination, and by pointing out to you where the pitfalls and where the safe passage are. And because in Tibetan culture we tend to place this very high expectation and projections onto gurus. And of course if you are growing up even in little villages in Tibet, you have elders who basically give you messages and comments and wisdom words and tell you what to do. With whom you should marry or not, and what kind of profession you have to take in your life, and so forth. And perhaps also they have more of a shamanic element in terms of finding you your inner guidance in Tibetan culture. But ultimately, guru means somebody who guides you. As a matter of fact, in some of those Vajrayana literatures, guru is referred to as the guide, the ultimate guide, the supreme guide, the guidance, the supreme guidance, the eternal guidance. But we have to remember that the essence of the Vajrayana is that guru lies within you. The ultimate in guru lies within you. The ultimate in guru does not lie outside yourself. You can find spiritual navigators or teachers or mentors who show you the right path, and who point out to you your essential nature as the exalted guru. So the guru does not lie outside yourself. That means there is a reservoir of wisdom and intelligence that lies within you. If you are able to recognize that, then that *is* the highest level of inner guidance. And you can trust in it and take refuge in it.

- MS: Thank you, Rinpoche. [laughs] That's a very comprehensive answer for the first question! Were there instances in your childhood, and you mentioned a little the culture you grew up in, but were there instance in your childhood where you located or identified this source or process of inner guidance? Or the inner guru?
- B2: Inner guru, well...I don't remember at exactly which age I had the notion of inner guidance, but definitely I came to a very vivid, almost realization, that there is this powerful source which lies with me. And to realize that is very self-empowering, but also a little bit challenging. Maybe like a small earthquake. Not a 7.8 earthquake, but a small earthquake. You know that when you live in the Bay Area, there's always constant earthquakes, it just shakes your

windows, that's all. It's like that. When you begin to develop a different relationship with your parents, elders, as well as also your spiritual masters too, it does not mean that once you have contact with inner guidance you're not going to listen to them. Or be some kind of spoiled whippersnapper, like delinquent, spiritual delinquent. But no longer are you this little spiritual infant who constantly has to be dependent upon the grace and the mercy and the wisdom of the others, even spiritual teachers. So it's very self-empowering and really changes your relationship with your spiritual teachers as well. And because you begin to realize that the ultimate guru lies within yourself. So you have dharma teachers, you have spiritual elders in your life, and not because you're eternally doomed to take refuge in them, and believing that yourself is ultimately ignorant and completely lost, but there is light and wisdom in yourself. So you have all these spiritual teachers and gurus in your life in order to be awakened to the state in which *you* are the inner guru and *you* can really find out what the truth is. As a matter of fact, you are the only one who is able to realize the truth and to actualize the meaning of your life. For example, in the western world people are always searching, I think, for the inner guidance in relation to business or career or romantic relationship. I've personally experienced many people coming to consult with me, often asking many questions relating to their career, their work. So I think people are looking for inner guidance in order to make the right decisions, because people are afraid of making the wrong decisions. Even though ultimately there are no wrong decisions. If you trust yourself to make decisions, then there is no wrong decision. I remember one time this great Tibetan Lama, Panchen Lama, who passed away more than a decade ago. And he used to tell Tibetans, "It's OK to make mistakes. Just try not to make the same mistake twice." [laughs] People are afraid of making mistakes. They don't trust themselves, they trust other people, they look up to other people to tell them what to do. Eventually they may end up asking somebody what kind of T-shirt we have to wear, [laughs] and what kind of clothes we should wear, what kind of car we should drive! That's why in the western world we have codependence in the spiritual communities. That's where the cult comes into being, because people give up their freedom and their self-empowerment. They completely look for the guidance from other people. But we have inner guidance. People *must* realize we have inner guidance. This inner guidance is truly amazing. It's the wisdom of the wisdom, the guidance of the guidance. It's the most exalted and intelligent, enlightened and infallible than any other guidance you can find from other sources. Buddha actually never told people that he is the guide. He *never* told people that he can give infallible guidance. Buddha always said, ultimately everything is within you. Wisdom, intelligence, everything's within *you*. *You* are the Buddha. So don't go without. Don't look for the ultimate guidance outwards, but go back and go

back. And if you let go of all your fear, your doubt, you'll recognize that your true nature *is* a supreme Buddha. So that is the source of inner guidance. So I actually remember, in my personal life, *that* when I have to make decisions, important decisions, as well as simple decisions. Especially for important decisions, there's always inner guidance. And there's always wisdom that knows exactly what to do. But that doesn't mean I'm always listening to my inner guidance. Because my mind is sometimes very much overwhelmed by conditioning and my habits and my propensities. So perhaps, instead of me listening to and trusting my inner guidance, I tend to perhaps make decisions and act based upon my mental conditions and karmic propensities too. Actually, one time I trusted my inner guidance, and because it was so very profound, because it's not like I have some thought today and then tomorrow the thought is gone. It's not like that this early morning I want to go for work, and later on I realize I'm not in the mood to go for work. It's not one of those transient thoughts or visions, but I had this very profound, almost inspiration that I should go to monastery and become a monk. I had that very strong, almost inner guidance, when I was very young, when I was a very young age, which kept just happening in my heart and mind, again, again, months and months, even years, which led me to go to the monastery. I was a monk for, how many years? I forgot, but quite a few years, maybe 16 or 17 years. [laughs] And that was my inner guidance. Because I listened to it. And it wasn't a thought. It wasn't some kind of instinctual desire. It was a very deep, profound longing, this guidance that was telling me that I should go to a monastery and to study the teaching of Buddha dharma, and to dedicate my life to the holy dharma. And I listened to that inner guidance, which changed my life. Completely.

- MS: And so there's something about a transient quality, of a passing fancy, as opposed to a persistent one. This seems to be a way to differentiate between true guidance and the ego's preferences.
- B2: Yes, definitely. I think that my true guidance, when I felt, it wasn't habitual. It wasn't just like painful, "Oh, I have to do this," like you're addicted to whatever, certain activities in your life. There wasn't any pain. Or there wasn't any sense of suffering. But rather it was actually very liberating. It's very ecstatic to just experience being in touch with that inner guidance. Because I believe inner guidance is always benevolent. It's never malevolent. Because it's coming from this divine source called Buddha nature. So whenever you feel being in touch with that inner guidance, you feel very much self-empowered, and quite joyous and confident too. So when I was young, every time that thought or aspiration of going to the monastery came into my mind, it used to be quite ecstatic and jubilant in my memory. Because I believe that whenever that inner guidance enters your consciousness there's a sense of joy,

bliss and inspiration. Because inner guidance is ultimately a benevolent source.

MS: I'm curious as to whether inner guidance has taken different forms, or ways of showing itself or revealing itself in your life.

B2: I believe so. These days, when I want to consult with inner guidance...Perhaps that's not right, because consultation has the notion of duality between the questioner and then the answerer. But, I often sometimes meditate to be in that, whatever you might call, in that union with my inner guidance. Even though my inner guidance is no other than my pure consciousnesses. But, of course, like anybody else, my mind is most of the time run by all of these mental statics and mental noise and commotions, all of these thoughts and perceptions. It's like, for example, trying to listen to a very lovely music while you're also walking like downtown. [laughs] There's so much noise, you can't really hear this beautiful music, because there's a whole bunch of noise. Sometimes our conditioned mind is like the downtown of New York. I was in New York visiting, [laughs] and there's so much noise, you're no longer able to distinguish which noise belongs to which. It's just one big ocean of noise. In the same way our mind is like that too, so we're not really able to hear the message of the inner guidance most of the time. And therefore it's good to meditate and to be in the silence and completely let yourself reveal what the inner guidance is, and then to realize the message. Whatever you are searching for. In the same way, if you are making even simple decisions in your life. And you can sometimes meditate and be in the silence. And I believe that you're able to find the distinction between the inner guidance and also the noise of the ego's conditioned mind, which is run ultimately by impulses and compulsive behaviors.

MS: So in terms of different ways in which guidance manifests, you're saying that there is a static-y, interference quality of the ego's compulsions or passing fancies. Whereas with inner guidance there's more of a subtle quality, like a lonely violin in the middle of a rock concert.

B2: Yes.

MS: And so in terms of forms or ways in which inner guidance arises for you, is it an auditory quality, when you mention the quality of sound as a metaphor? I'm wondering the different ways in which it appears or manifests.

B2: Well, you can answer this question in many ways, but to me it manifests as awareness most of the time. Just awareness. And of course, awareness can be translated into language too, more like mental words. But most of the time it's just awareness, a sense of

knowingness. And sometimes you don't really have to meditate. The inner guidance is always there. And I think ultimately we just have to realize this oneness between our self and the source of that inner guidance, whatever that might be called. The pure consciousness. The Buddha mind. The Tathagatagarbha. The divine one within. In the shamanic language they might call in the deities, the inborn deities, or the ancestor deities who also will guide you. But I think there's a point that you can realize that oneness between you and inner guidance. Then you don't have to say, "Oh, I have to make a very important decision today. But let me take a few moments to get in touch with my inner guidance. You see? There's really no separation. *You* become the inner guidance. I would say Buddha becomes the inner guidance himself in his lifetime. Especially after his great awakening. I would say Padmasambhava became inner guidance to himself. I would say like [Majam Lapham?] becomes inner guidance for himself. For their consciousness. And there's no separation between themselves and their inner guidance. They *are* their inner guidance, to themselves.

MS: And what is this guidance in service of? You mentioned it always has a benevolent quality.

B2: Yes. I think it's always a benevolent quality. Because, well, of course some people might be really listening to their voice of neuroses and telling themselves, "I'm really in touch with my inner guidance." [laughs] People can make mistakes, yeah? These days, oh, as always people sometimes are very spiritual and people into shamanism and all kinds of spiritual practices. And they like to use the terminology, "inner guidance." And it's very possible that somebody might be completely being ruled and deceived by their neuroses, but thinking they are actually listening and trusting in their inner guidance too. Such pitfalls can happen. But usually I can say that inner guidance is benevolent. It's like, if I use really more modern words, that anybody can relate to it, it is the idea of trusting in yourself. Trusting in yourself. You see that in the west we often use this phrase on the street. "Trusting ourselves." Do we trust ourselves? Most of the time we don't trust ourselves. And therefore we often actually go out and to look for answers and guidance from other sources [laughs] you see. Such as counselors, therapists. One time I was flying from Boise to Seattle. I sat next to a lady and she mentioned that her job was a life coach. That was the first time I learned that word, "life coach." [laughs] I said, "What is that, life coach?" She said she basically gets money from people by telling them what they're supposed to do with heir life. And of course, nothing wrong with that. Life coach can help you to not so much guide you, but reveal you your inner guidance. So to me, if I were a spiritual counselor, if I were some kind of elder, my intention would be to help people and to give them guidance. Not so much that *I* become their guide, but empowering them and

helping them to access their inner strengths and to realize that there is this amazing divine source lying in themselves, which they can take refuge in it. Which is the true inner guidance.

MS: So I hear you saying that the ultimate act of benevolence as a guide is to put someone in touch with their *own* inner guide.

B2: Yes, absolutely.

MS: Their own inner wisdom and innate Buddha nature. And what is that Buddha nature itself? What is that in service of? What does that awaken in somebody, when they're in touch with that quality of trust?

B2: I believe that life has a purpose for everybody. And the moment we are conceived there's already an assignment for everybody. And regardless of your gender, we all have a purpose, we have a higher purpose. And that has to do with awakening to who we are, our true nature. Which is itself wisdom. Which is itself the joy, the love, the compassion, all those enlightened attributes. Everything is already complete within each of us. So life's purpose is awakening to that one truth. That truth in which we are already Buddha. And that Buddha is the ocean of wisdom and love. And our life is actually a journey to arrive there. And sometimes the journey can take forever, especially if we're not listening to our inner guidance. In the Buddhist teachings they talk about how we have been taking birth countless lifetimes and we're still on the journey to that great awakening. And that journey may last another aeons and aeons, or maybe last a while before we reach the final destination. But the purpose of life is really to realize our true nature. And I believe that inner guidance is the guidance that leads us to that final destination, that great awakening. And therefore, in my situation, I trust in my inner guidance, which is really in some sense told me, even though this is a little bit paradoxical language, when I say the inner guidance "told me," because the inner guidance is an expression of my true consciousness. It's not separate from me. But I will say as language, as a figure of speech, "told me" that I should be on the path of the holy dharma. And I took that with a great respect and it changed my life for the better. [laughs]

MS: I'm very interested in this paradox, because the actual languaging of guidance has a dialectical or dialogic quality. It's a relational construct. But as you're saying, ultimately that separation is an illusion, and yet we seem to have these manifest beings of guidance on certain levels of Buddhist cosmology. As you mentioned, deities, or dakinis, whom we might have a relationship with. Can you describe this paradox a bit more? How we can have this perception of separation in service of unified awareness? And does that

paradox, is it simply a skillful means to arrive at that ultimate awareness, that these are all illusory separations?

B2: Yes. You can say they're skillful means. I think most people, I wouldn't say most people, but perhaps many people, are not capable of realizing this highest level of inner guidance. That is, you are already inner guidance and you are already wisdom. You are already insight itself. But the question is, how many people are capable of realizing such wisdom? Perhaps many people are not capable. So, in that sense, people are still searching for inner guidance, in the spiritual sense too. And we have, for example, this notion of dharmapalas and dakinis, deities. Even in Vajrayana Buddhism they are the perfect source of guidance and wisdom. And you can practice in certain ceremonies or sadhanas too, and somehow cultivate your relationship with those spiritual entities. Like deities, devas and dakinis. It is true that often in Vajrayana Buddhist tradition many of the practitioners tend to worship those spiritual entities, devas, dakinis and dharmapalas to find answers, to find inner guidance. As well also, people sometimes consult with diviners, astrologers, and of course gurus to seek the inner guidance or the guidance itself. To make decisions, important decisions in life. Yes, you can call those spiritual entities as skillful ways of finding the guidance.

MS: And how are these entities...Both what *are* these entities, and how are they getting us closer in contact with that ultimate inner guru realization?

B2: It sounds, from my personal experience, when people are really taking refuge in those spiritual entities, it seems they have no idea, they have no clue, how to find the guidance from them. Let's say somebody might be worshipping a dharmapala. Dharmapala means whatever, the spiritual guidance. Somebody might be worshipping the spiritual guardian, but perhaps he or she might not have any clue how to be in touch with that dharmapala. So most of the time [laughs] in Vajrayana Buddhism, the practitioners, the devotees, intend to go to that messenger, the third party, which is always the guru, to find perfect guidance from the deities, the dharmapalas they worship. And usually some gurus are willing to be the messengers, the mailmen. And such a guru may tell you that the dharmapala is telling you to do this and that. Or the deity's actually telling you to do this and that. Either the guru claims that he has a dream or vision or direct contact with that higher spiritual entities. And some people have often this kind of experience. It could be perhaps a revelation or could be simply delusion that they are channeling the deities, those higher entities, and to make decisions in your life. To me, when we say inner guidance, it always relating to this idea of making decisions in our life. That's why people are searching for guidance. People don't want to make

the ultimate mistake. People want to be in charge of reality, they want to make sure that they never make mistakes. People are afraid of making mistakes. [laughs]

MS: So it's often a fear-based pursuit.

B2: Yes, fear-based sometimes. Because guidance *is* a dualistic terminology too.

MS: And do you mind commenting more on what these deities are? These frequencies that we can, if let's say we're not mistaking our neurotic relationship with the dharmapala or something, if we truly are in contact with the real deity and we're using that relationship properly, what is happening in that seemingly dualistic sadhana or relationship?

B2: Yes, well, I think it depends on the very nature or quality of that experience too. It depends on the individuals too. And ultimately, deity is of course the expression of our true nature. So deity, if you say, such as Kalachakra, or you can say Chakrasambhava, or Vajrayogini, these are the traditional Vajrayana deities. They are different names of the same entity. They are the different names of your Buddha nature or your primordial pure consciousness. So if you truly realize your pure consciousness, then you realize the ultimate essence of those deities. Then you realize the ultimate meaning of the Kalachakra and Chakrasambhava. Then you can say that you're completely in union with the Kalachakra. You've truly realized your pure consciousness. That is the highest level of the inner guidance. Then *you* become the guidance. Because to realize Vajrayogini, for example, or Avalokiteshvara, is that you *become* the Vajrayogini or the Avalokiteshvara. Or, in other words, you are awakened to your primordial true nature as the Avalokiteshvara. That is the higher guidance. But in other cases, maybe somebody might be just connecting to some kind of different psychic state. Or maybe just relating to some kind of cultural and anthropological archetype, these deities. And then in some sense making stories out their own fantasies too. That's very possible.

MS: And so, this is a whole other question obviously, but these different spiritual technologies that come from different cultural soils, and the artifact nature when we might cling on to the form and lose sight of the essential inspiration of that form...As westerners, of course, right, there are many different deities, and I guess I have a couple of different questions here. One, is how we might recognize what different expression of our true nature, what different deity might be most appropriate for us. And two, is this whole use of deity practice appropriate for someone of a different culture from where that deity emanated?

B2: Oh, this is a very relevant question. I'm very glad that you have brought this question. And I always regard the deity, the notion of deity, is like technology. If you ask anybody or myself, "Is technology benevolent or not?" Well, it depends on how you use it. You look at human history from hindsight, technology itself is just technology, but people misuse it. People developed automatic bonds, people developed warplanes and missiles. And technology has done terrible and just horrifying phenomena in human history. And also technology has done great things, like telephone and internet and airplane. And technology has actually brought humanity in closer relationship with each other than ever. Through technology we see what is really happening in other parts of the world. For example, I'm always watching news. I know that there is a terrible, very suffering happening all over the world. Then you feel that you want to say prayer, and you want to donate a little bit of money to the charity programs. And that has to do with technology, because without technology how can I be aware of the situation that is happening, let's say in some small village in Africa? [laughs] So technology has that great sense too. So to me, like deity is deity yoga, this is like technology, it depends on how you use it. I see that some people are actually awakening and benefiting from practicing those deity yoga from the east, like the sadhanas from the Vajrayana tradition or maybe even the Hindu tradition. And I see that some people are getting even more deluded and more dualistic, and actually more attached to the concepts, forms, ideas than *ever* from practicing the deity yoga. So it really depends on the individual and their spiritual aptitude. But in general, personally I'm very cautious about westerners just plunging into those esoteric practices from the east without really thinking twice, or without making sure that it is appropriate practice. But in general, I think deity yoga is a very beautiful practice too. And the purpose of the deity yoga in the Vajrayana is to realize that the deity is not outside. The deity is none other than your true nature. Vajrayogini is who you are. Vajrayogini does not lie outside of yourself. Vajrayogini is not some kind of dakini or super-lady [laughs] who lives in heaven in another world. Who is red colored, who is always dancing. That is deism. So the purpose of deity, as well as deity yoga in the Vajrayana, is to dissolve the duality between deity and oneself. Because as a human consciousness goes, and we believe this duality that there is a separation between God and oneself. God is out there, God is in heaven, we are stuck in this terrible realm. Either you can call it world or human realm, but that is mistaken perception. The God resides within yourself, the deity lies within yourself. Vajrayana actually uses this notion of deities as not separate from yourself, but dissolving that separation as a skillful means.

- MS: So if we're approaching these deities correctly, how best to discern what deity is most appropriate for us? So as you say, there are not only deities, but there are different dharmapalas, devas, dakinis, right? What is the difference between Vajrayogini and Avalokiteshvara and Vajrasattva ultimately if they are all avenues towards the dissolution of that relationship? How to skillfully navigate or choose which relationship to choose if we are using them most correctly?
- B2: Yes. Well, I think there are two ways of developing connection with the deities. One way is very much kind of like almost spontaneous. A feeling. For instance, when I went to Mexico city many years ago I saw the images of Mother Mary everywhere and I felt connection with Mother Mary immediately. And I completely loved that image, and also I loved this whole archetype of Mother Mary, whether she was real or not, which is no longer my consideration. But I felt great connection to her, the Mother Mary, even though I am Buddhist. And to me that is like spontaneous feeling, [laughs] spontaneous devotion that occurred in my consciousness.
- MS: So when you say connection, spontaneous connection, there's an element of love or devotion.
- B2: Affinity, yes. Affinity. And you just feel that you are in love with that deity, or you have affinity with that deity. In the same way that we feel we have affinity with certain people in our life. It's very amazing that when you go outside you have affinity with certain people, right there. When you're talking with somebody you have affinity with that person immediately sometimes. Or if you go to even zoo, you feel affinity with certain animals than other animals. It's not so much about that you have a biased love or compassion, but it's more affinity, more a feeling of being connected. So I felt very much connected to the Mother Mary, but that does not mean that I would be composing a tantric sadhana of Mother Mary. There's no such thing, tantric sadhana of Mother Mary, or deity yoga of Mother Mary! [laughs] So the truth of really connecting with the deities, one is the spontaneous feeling of connection that I had: "Oh, I love this deity." And I think many people in the west connect with certain deities even when they're not Buddhist. Many people I think connect with certain tradition Mahayana as well as Vajrayana deities, such as Tara. Everybody loves Tara. And many people connect with Avalokiteshvara. And many people connect with Buddha. Therefore you see that almost everybody in Berkeley has an image of Buddha in their garden. They just have this natural, spontaneous connection with Buddha. And I was in Mexico recently and I saw people having an image of Buddha in their gardens. Even though they're not Buddhist, it means that sometimes you just have a spontaneous connection with the deities. And there are a lot of deities. There are tons of deities in eastern

spirituality, both Hinduism and Buddhism. If you're not connecting with one deity you can connect with another deity. Like people have connection with, for example, with Shiva, just like that. Or Saraswati and so forth. Saraswati's actually a deity worshipped by both Buddhists and Hindus. Many of the deities are very much coming in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions in the east. So that's a more spontaneous way of relating or connecting. But there's another way of connecting to deities. It's more like the tantric sadhana where you receive an empowerment, *abhisheka*, or an empowerment initiation, in regarding to a particular deity. And then you make a certain commitment to practice deity yoga. Either Vajrayogini yoga or Vajrakilaya yoga. Usually the way you choose a deity yoga is based on your own personal affinity. Or sometimes you consult with a guru, a Vajrayana guru, in order to find out your personal deity yoga. And then often the lama will tell you what your personal deity will be. That could be Vajrayogini, it could be Avalokiteshvara. And I have amazing, very enlightening experience with the deity yoga. Through deity yoga I felt that I have a little bit understanding of oneness. Oneness with everything. Especially, if I give a very concrete example, whenever I practice the sadhana of Avalokiteshvara. One of the experiences that I feel is compassion and love towards all beings. And it's such an enlightening experience. So deity yoga can be very powerful. I think one thing the deity is not so much for in the Vajrayana is telling you what kind of car you should buy, that inner guidance, or what kind of job you should take if there's a job offer. It's not so much about finding all the right directions in the mundane world. But it's more like discovering your true nature as the sublime Buddha, or the Vajradhara. But it is true that in shamanic tradition in Tibet the deity's function is more like guiding you on the right passage in the mundane world. Affairs of war, money, success, marriage and so forth.

MS: So inner guidance can help navigate the mundane world, but ultimately to use that mundane decision-making in service of ultimate truth.

B2: Yes, ultimate truth. And also I think true inner guidance is that you trust yourself. No matter whatever you do you must trust yourself. And sometimes we don't trust ourselves, and therefore we go out in search of our guidance. But if there is a pure guidance, if you ran into the right good-hearted and wise guide and they will help us to be in touch with our inner guidance, that's my experience. I have been searching for good guidance from outer sources such as my dharma teachers, and my experience is not so much that they are telling me, like in the role of a PGS [personal guidance system], a spiritual PGS, [laughs] you know this device telling you where you should move your car, guided by satellite, a spiritual PGS telling me which direction I should take. But my

experience is every time I consult with them I feel that I am empowered and I feel that I am capable of making the right decision. And I feel that somehow, not only that I am making the right decision, but I feel that I'm very confident and without so much regret at the result. Because there's no mistake in the ultimate sense when we trust in ourselves. And life is always a journey of unexpected and surprising events. And the idea is that we grow, we keep growing, we keep making mistakes. And every time we make mistakes we grow, we transform.

- MS:* This is a real core of my inquiry in this exploration: how do we discriminate between authentic and false confidence, between authentic and false trust in relation to psychospiritual guidance or what we're calling inner guidance?
- B2:* That's a really fine question. I think many people are stuck in this place, and the question of how do we know if we're guided by false or the true inner guidance. How do we know? That's a very good question, yeah? A very big question. But I like to say that ultimately all we can do is really trust in ourselves. And when we trust in ourselves, I think there's a way in which we're always guided by the authentic, the true inner guidance. Complete trust in ourselves. But in trusting ourselves, also has the quality of being content with ourselves, which results in joy and happiness too.
- MS:* So you've mentioned discerning between ego preference, where sometimes we want to do something and we have the sense that this will bring me immediate satisfaction. And there can be a transience to that. But there can also be a compulsion and a persistence to that, where it doesn't leave us alone and yet it's still deriving from ego.
- B2:* Yes, absolutely.
- MS:* And on that level, how do we discern between when it's an ego impulse or an ego orientation, and, like you said, the one that can truly be trusted, which is in service of much deeper truth?
- B2:* Yes. It depends on from which perspective we're looking at. I think we can say that the ultimate guidance is in service of discovering our true nature. But then we have also day to day phenomena of relying on our inner guidance too. And we only have so much time to distinguish between whether we're guided by our ego or guided by awareness. Although all we can ever do is very much trust in ourselves too.
- MS:* And when you say "ourselves," how do we know that what we're putting our trust in is genuine?

B2: And also we know when we are governed by ego and we know we are simply governed by, or overtaken by, a habit. We know the difference between whether we are completely dictated or governed by our habitual patterns or with the awareness. I think we know right there. The moment we have this willingness to go *inside*, each of us, and not so much listening to the mental states, these impulses and compulsive tendencies. If we just take a moment to go deep within each of us, I think we already know whether we are guided by our ego-conditioned mind or we are guided by wisdom. We know right there.

MS: We know on a somatic level? Is there a physical sensation around it or is there a...Because I hear you talking of the ego as having a static-y, or compulsive, or constriction, or tightness, or a craving aspect to it?

B2: Yes. Let me give you a very concrete example. Let's say, imagine that I'm going to a party and I'm the driver and there is a very expensive bottle of wine placed on the table. And let's say the wine is as old as 100 years. [laughs] So everybody else is drinking wine and you start perhaps salivating, yeah? And you may want to drink that wine. Your ego tells you, your ego conditioned mind maybe tells you, "It's OK to drink that wine." But there's inner guidance telling you, "Do not touch that wine because you are driving the car and you may run into accidents, you may run into greater tragedy." So that's the battle between the inner guidance and ego. And some people are not strong enough to say no, to stand up and say no to the ego and take the side of the inner guidance.

MS: We might use the word "conscience" sometimes in this sense.

B2: Yes.

MS: OK. I'm wondering if there is then a developmental aspect to your inner guidance to trust, kinds of information, its way of appearing.

B2: I think we all know how to be in touch with inner guidance. I think we just have to know how to trust ourselves. Not worrying ultimately whether we are trusting our ego or our awareness. We cannot really worry about that. Otherwise the trust in oneself never will come about. So we just have to *trust* in ourselves. And learn how to tap into that language of trust in ourselves. And then we will know how to tap into that language, "trust in ourselves." That's one of the precious phrases, "trust in ourselves." And then, once we really trust in ourselves, I think we're able to go beyond the fear of making the ultimate mistake. Because usually people are very afraid of making a mistake. And they always want to make the right decision, and they always want to go to the right

direction. Either they're looking for success in the mundane world, or the spiritual world, or are very much afraid of going in the wrong direction and making the ultimate error. But if we trust in ourselves, there's no really mistake that we make.

MS: And in your own life's journey, in temporal terms, has there been a developmental aspect in coming to that trust?

B2: Yes, absolutely. If I'm listening to my own choice right now, if I'm completely in touch with my inner guidance, my inner guide tells me right now, "I never made a mistake." Yes, I made mistakes. But mistakes are great. There's nothing to be guilty or shameful about it, because mistakes help me to grow, help me how to open my heart to the humanity. And to also learning about who I am and what my limitations are. So the inner guidance has a quality of transcending fear, transcending fear of the unknown. I think, let me see if I speak a little bit of psychology, Buddhist psychology. If there is such a thing as Buddhist psychology. There *is* connection between the inner guidance or everybody's searching for and the fear of also unknown. Why do we search for inner guidance? Because they have also fear of the unknown. Afraid of the unknown.

MS: I'm interested in this idea of inner guidance and external guidance coming from teachers or readings, and especially in this certain tradition of the Vajrayana. Have you felt sometimes a tension or a balancing act between the two, between your inner guidance of what the tradition or a teacher has spoken to? And has there ever been a struggle, or somehow a lack of harmony, a disharmony, between the two?

B2: Yes, that happens quite often, actually. That *is* the greatest problem. I think this lack of harmony or lack of balance between external guidance and inner guidance, you see? There's lack of balance, definitely. That is the greatest challenge in the spiritual world right now, in the spiritual community. If I tried putting more precise language, the external guidance usually often comes from outer source, such as parents, elders, and teachers, and often gurus too. Which are very much needed. Their guidance is very much needed. But I think ultimately their guidance is to help us discover our inner guidance. Discovering that we are *already* the wisdom. We are *already* the intelligence. And therefore, for example, regarding the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni, who was perhaps the best guide ever living on the earth in human history. And *his* guidance, *his* message, was to help people discovering that they are already Buddha. They are already their guide. The true guide lies within themselves.

- MS: Have you ever found an external teacher, who you have taken to be speaking from a place of true guidance, of truth, of enlightenment, have you ever felt a tension or disconnect between your *own* inner guidance and the guidance of someone who you assume to be speaking from a perspective of truth?
- B2: Absolutely. That happens a lot. Especially if that teacher is constantly playing the role of the guide in your life. And who is not allowing, permitting you, either directly or indirectly, trusting your inner guidance. Maybe such a teacher is actually putting this subtle thought in your mind that trusting your inner guidance is rather a sin, and rather some kind of sinful [laughs] act. So therefore, some spiritual teachers, either willingly or unconsciously, as well as also in cooperation with students and also spiritual devotees, create this kind of relationship, this kind of dualistic relationship, that you are not allowed to trust in your inner guidance. Rather, you have to completely surrender to the outer guidance, only the outer guidance. There is no space for inner guidance. And that can happen. Then that means maybe it has nothing to do with some of those teachers that are really working secretly to create that kind of codependent relationship, and as a relationship with the master and slave or guardian and devotee, but maybe just the whole thing is just a reflection of the fact that *both* the guru and the devotee are very much deluded and involved.
- MS: I understand this happening very easily from a teacher that is coming from a place of ego.
- B2: Yes, very easily, teachers, yes. Especially from teachers. Teacher has higher responsibility than students. Parents have more responsibility than children. Parents never can say it's children's responsibility. It's always their responsibility. Parents realize that their children are actually putting poison to their mouth, parents never can say it's the children's responsibility, it's *their* responsibility. In this sense, I think spiritual teachers, adepts, gurus have the highest responsibility.
- MS: And let's the teacher we assume to be coming from a place of selfless motivation. The teacher is in the place of true abiding enlightened nature. And their motivation is *purely* to help the student get in touch with their own inner nature too. Let's assume this to be a very clean kind of situation. Have you ever personally been in a situation where you, yourself, have felt that you're in touch with your own inner guidance, and that's felt very clean and pure and true, and you've been with a teacher who you've trusted is also coming from that very true place too, and there has *still* been a disconnect?

- B2: Not so much. That never has happened in my experience. I think especially if you're really trusting yourself, you realize that we are already in intelligent and in touch with truth. And we know when there is red flag. We know. We can snap and we can smell when something is burning. When something is fishy we can smell that easily. And if we really trust in ourselves we really know exactly what is happening. My teacher, [name], he's completely selflessness. And I always trust him as a bodhisattva, as a true spiritual master. Because I also remember that I learned how to trust myself at an early age, and because of that, there wasn't struggle or some kind of murkiness between him and me. My relationship with him was very healthy and pure. And what he gave me was a very precious wisdom that helping me, guiding me to realize who I am, my true nature.
- MS: So when the teacher and the student are both in the place of inner guidance, there is no conflict.
- B2: Yes, it's always so obvious. There is no conflict. And there's a kind of, my relationship with him was very equal too, it was very equal. And he was like my teacher, but he was also my very good friend. It's not like there's fear of abandonment, fear of punishment, or this kind of sense of hierarchy. There isn't anything like that.
- MS: And no fear of offending by not being proper.
- B2: Yes, there's nothing like that. It's very easygoing being around him. Like being in the presence of my best friend. Because my teacher never will reject me, would never actually turn his back on me because if I don't do what he asks me to do. [laughs] That shows he is selflessness and enlightened. The teachers who are not evolved, they often reject their students. And if student are not always abiding in according to *their* wishes and *their* commandment.
- MS: So if the student feels they have to be a certain way, that can be a sign that their own inner guidance is in jeopardy.
- B2: Yes, the true teacher never give up their love for others. Never ever.
- MS: Do you feel that your own current relationship with inner guidance is still developing or evolving?
- B2: Yes, I always feel it is evolving. Definitely. Constantly. And I think especially if we keep trusting yourself and inner guidance is always evolving.
- MS: Can you describe what that is like for you currently to have that? Because it sounds like you are able to, and even from a very early

age, to recognize that trust. And that trust is a place of absolute clarity.

B2: Yes.

MS: So what is the development or the evolution of that? How do you experience that?

B2: Let me put this answer in a very gross and rugged language. To me when I'm trusting myself is really deeply knowing that nobody's better than me and nobody's worse than me. Everybody's equal in the ultimate sense. [laughs] We are beings with our limitations and also we are all divine in ourselves. That means nobody's really better than anybody else. And nobody's worse than anybody else. We're all one. We are all equal. And that is the truth. So I think trusting oneself is the discrimination that I *am* equal with everybody. I'm equal to the humblest person who's begging for a penny on the street, who might appear actually more confused and poorer than me. But I am equal to that homeless, and that homeless person is equal to me. In the same way, I'm equal to the, if there is a Chakravadin of the universal monarchy, who might be sitting on the highest throne, who might be living in a palace guarded by a whole army, legion, but I am equal to that person, that person to me. That person is equal to the homeless and that homeless is equal to that Chakravadin. There's no really, in the ultimate sense, hierarchy or someone is exalted, more exalted than others. Or someone is less exalted than others. I think as human beings we don't realize that. We believe in this fallacy that there is an ultimate hierarchy. Somebody is better than oneself. Now I am maybe worse than somebody else, so I'm better than somebody else. And that is the ultimate delusion which has to be transcended. So trusting me is in my own personal experience is just knowing that I am, I am good. I am intelligent. I *am* who I *am*.

MS: And with that awareness there's still a developing or evolving?

B2: Yes, absolutely.

MS: And where does the evolution or development still lie?

B2: Well, I still look for guidance from my dharma friends and some of my dharma friends that live in Tibet. I talk to them. And I have dharma friends living not so far from my place. I consult with them and their messages are always liberating, enlightening as always. But at the same time I don't have this sense that, "Oh, I'm this poor and confused devotee. I'm worshipping at somebody's lotus feet. Somebody's better than me." That kind of childish fantasy has already gone a long time ago from consciousness. And I don't see that anybody's ever less than me ever. And I don't ever see than

I'm better than anybody. I'm equal to everybody, the humanity. I'm equal to the bird and insect who's crawling on the ground. We're all equal.

MS: So when you consult with a dharma friend, there's no sense of lack. There's no sense of needing or wanting. There's no sense of poverty.

B2: Yes.

MS: At the same time, because you're fully complete in your own inner guidance, what does the consultation do for you?

B2: Actually, consultation helps me to reaffirm, reaffirm, reaffirm that ultimately I can make the choice. I can make the right choice. Because there's *fear* to make choices in our lives. And if you let the fear run and you make wrong choice, not only wrong choice, but if we keep making the same mistaken choice again and again, as the Panchen Lama said, "Don't make the same mistake twice. [laughs]

MS: I heard recently that the writer Samuel Beckett said that one of the goals of life is just to fail better each time.

B2: Yes. [laughs] Exactly. And mistakes...I make mistakes these days constantly. I even can't count. [laughs] And I'm entirely OK with that.

MS: [laughs] And along with this idea of evolution or development, if we're in touch with that inner realization of truth, of our true nature, are there different degrees of that realization?

B2: I think there are different degrees of that realization because everything has evolution in the universe. So in Buddhism therefore we have this notion of ten bhumis and five paths. Which is almost, how do you say, measurement of like, way of measuring the evolution of inner realization. The ten bhumis and five paths. Yes, absolutely.

MS: So for someone, let's say, who has reached the final bhumi, is there still evolution?

B2: I think that is the highest level of evolution. And when we reach that 11th bhumi, the highest evolution, such as the Buddha, such as Padmasambhava, these are called Vidyadharas, the wisdom holders.

MS: And at this stage of final evolution, [laughs] what *is* that?

B2: Well, of course, I'm simply speculating about that, since obviously I'm not near to that realization, [laughs] that attainment. But I think the idea, perhaps, is it's the place where ego is totally transcended. And there's not even a moment when you have an affair with ego. Totally transcended. Like total transcendence of the ego.

MS: So as a student, some of the teachings recommend that we see our own root teacher as a fully enlightened Buddha. And yet you're saying that perhaps this same teacher has not reached the final bhumi of realization. But there's something important for the student to project this final realization upon the teacher?

B2: Yes. This kind of language is very much carried in many of the Vajrayana teachings. And I've been reflecting on that phrase, because that phrase is everywhere in the Vajrayana teachings. And I don't have a problem to see my teacher [name] as a Buddha. But I think when we say, "Seeing our teachers as a Buddha," perhaps does not mean that our teacher is infallible. Does not mean that we have to see our teacher as infallible. It means that we have to realize our teacher, Buddha, as divine. The idea is that eventually we're able to expand that sacred outlook into seeing everybody else as a Buddha. But perhaps we have to start from somewhere. [laughs] And it would even be impossible, as well as a great challenge, to wake up one early morning, "Now I see everybody as Buddha." To me, I'm able to see that the Buddha essence in somebody, then in other people. When I see, not always just with spiritual teachers, but when I see, like you see sometimes there are so many *good* human beings, really amazing human beings. They're not even calling themselves spiritual, like people are working for the sake of humanity, for environment, and for me there's no difficulty to realize the Buddha nature in themselves. I can see all, if it is true that humanity, every individual possesses Buddha nature. This person has Buddha nature. This person is divine. This person possess Tathagatagarbha. So I think as an idea we start practicing the sacred outlook in relationship to our dharma teachers and realize that our dharma teachers are Buddha, and then eventually to realize that everyone is also Buddha. Everyone is Buddha. In that case, Buddha means everyone is perfect as they are. But it does not mean that to see our teacher as a Buddha is to see our teacher as infallible. This dog is Buddha, too. [pointing at his dog]

MS: So it's not so much a projection or idealization.

B2: No, no, no.

MS: It's a skillful means, in that they're best able to evoke that sacred perspective from us.

B2: Yes, yes. For example, let me see...I had difficulties with Christianity when I came to the United States. I hadn't encountered with too many Christians. As my cultural conditioned situation, I used to have little bit sense of judgment towards Christians.

MS: A stereotype.

B2: And stereotype of Christians. So one time I was invited to be at a Christian monastery in Big Sur. And wherein I met with these wonderful loving and good-hearted Christian monks. And I ended up having an amazing connection with them. And I developed a very good friendship with one monk. And he even came to visit me when I was living in Santa Cruz, and he became a very good friend of mine. I was able to trust him and relate to him as I was able to relate to my Buddhist brothers from the same monastery. To me there's no difference. And from that moment on, eventually I was able to relate to all the Christians. Now I see all the Christians are the same as pretty much Buddhists. We are all humans, there are no others. We're all humans. And we all should be able to love each other and have a compassion toward each other. But so, if not for this monk, [laughs] perhaps I might be struggling with my, whatever, mistrust with the Christians. But it began with the one monk, just like that. If you're able to realize that one human being has Buddha nature, from that moment on then you can expand that vision, that enlightened vision, and able to realize that everyone is Buddha in themselves.

MS: Including ourselves.

B2: Yes, that's what it means when Vajrayana says you have to see your teacher as Buddha. In Vajrayana teaching you have to see everybody as Buddha, but the reason there's more emphasizing on seeing the teacher as a Buddha is skillful means. But it does not mean that your teacher *is* actually infallible. Let him do everything what he wants to do, he never makes mistakes. That is the wrong interpretation of the holy scripture.

MS: Because with that misinterpreted projection, there's a much more, a greater risk of then having that idealization, and then that complete deprecation, the extremes of the either/or. If they make one mistake, then they're out! Same thing with a soul mate, right, we put them on a pedestal. They disappoint us in one little way, and then we think, "Oh no, they're nothing!"

B2: Yes, we throw them completely. You basically impeach them! [laughs] Yeah, you don't impeach them. Actually it's very good to realize your spiritual teacher is fallible so you don't impeach them when they make one mistake. Many people tend to like to see their teacher as infallible. And this has nothing to do with the Vajrayana

teaching that is to practice seeing your master as the Buddha. This idea of seeing master as Buddha has a very beautiful meaning. It means that you practice in maintaining sacred outlook, enlightened, which is to see that your guru is a Buddha in himself or self. And so with that then, you also begin to see that your spiritual brothers and sisters are also Buddha in themselves. And then finally you're able to see even your enemies as Buddha in themselves. That's the idea. So it's good to realize that your spiritual teacher *is* also fallible too. That's safer than to see your teacher as infallible. One day you realize that your spiritual teacher is not completely infallible and then you impeach your spiritual master.

MS: Which means basically on some subtle psychological level, we end up impeaching a part of ourselves.

B2: Yes, mm-hmm. I think therefore Buddha laid such a beautiful foundation in relationship between the individual and dharma and the guru. He says that you have to see Buddha as a physician. And the dharma as the medicine and yourself as the patient.

MS: And the sangha?

B2: Sangha's of course the fellowship. But to see guru as physician means that you don't always regard your physician, your doctor, as infallible. You regard your doctor could be fallible most of the time. And you don't...Your relationship to the doctor, physician, is to get medicine. That's all you really needed from your doctor. [laughs]

MS: Right. And your sangha are your fellow patients that are also getting better. And that helps build your trust in both the medicine and the doctor.

B2: Yes.

MS: OK. I think we've talked about this a bit, but does the strength or presence of your inner guidance vary over time?

B2: Absolutely. Yes.

MS: And what seems to help when you find it vacillating?

B2: Through meditation. Meditation is very, I think you can always have access to inner guidance when we meditate a lot. Because inner, deep meditation where you realize that all of fear, all of our delusions, are so transient and they are not the state of true being. And they are just conditioning, just floating around. It's just like watching bubbles. And we are able to see the clear distinction between our true nature, which is already eternal awareness,

wisdom and love, and whereas the conditions are so transient and they're not our true nature. And they're also ready to dissolve too. Fear dissolves. And delusion dissolves. It's the nature of time...Can I bring tea?

MS: Yes, please.

B2: Then let me bring tea.

MS: May I be of help?

B2: Oh, please, you enjoy. Please, take rest and I will bring tea to you and to myself.

MS: Thank you, Rinpoche.

[B2 brings two cups of tea.]

MS: Thank you, Rinpoche. One question I had written relates to just what you were talking about as well. I had asked whether the strength or presence of inner guidance varies over time and you said that at those moments that meditation's very helpful. And I think that answers my question of, how do you respond to those time when inner guidance is less available, or when you feel like it's not available? When it's not quite as present?

B2: Yes. I think that sometimes in our life as long journey there's so much times and opportunity to fall back into the old darkness, because the darkness is always wanting to reclaim us again. Because ego wants to survive. So at those times they say if someone has been having experience of awareness, inner light for long time, suddenly there is clouds again, there's like blackout. And you see this happen often to life of many people. Even spiritual practitioners too, are doing so well with their lives, they're coming out of their shell and feeling loving kindness, being quite evolved. And then something happens, and then sometimes you can't recognize them as the same person that you had known them for ages. [laughs] Sometime crisis actually helps playing the culprit for us to become reclaimed again by our inner darkness, the old fears, the old paranoid, the old insecurity. I think those times, of course, it's very good to practice the spiritual disciplines, in meditation or live in a very meditative environment such as monastery. Of course, we don't have monasteries around here, but I would say if someone is going to such a state where losing all our sense of inner guidance, can totally lost, it would be good to have a monastery where you can rest and meditate and to be healed, yeah? So anyway, I think during those times it's also good to have spiritual guidance too. But we're extremely vulnerable, so this is a tricky place. And in some sense we have a little to live up to our karma

too. We're so vulnerable and were extremely, sometimes, how would you say, susceptible to all kinds of information and all kind of relationships too. I think during those times we can sometimes follow the wrong doctor. Or if we're very open hearted we can also surrender to the guidance of the right doctor, a guru who has love and who has less ego, because our heart is very open. But these moments are so important to practice spiritual disciplines such as meditation. Or also trying to reach out to others such as spiritual teachers, or friends, or consult a counselor and so forth.

MS: And when you talk about the blackout, or the darkening, or the reassertion of the ego, this is basically fear?

B2: Yes, fear. Like being gripped by fear again. Fear, only fear.

MS: And the fear is in service of a preservation of a false self.

B2: Yes. False self, yes. That's all there is. [laughs]

MS: I'm wondering if your experience of inner guidance is consistent with what you have read or learned about its role within the Vajrayana? Have your experiences been very consistent to this tradition and the teachings you've been exposed to?

B2: Inner guidance to me or to everybody else?

MS: I'm wondering for you. Have you found any times when your experience has been at odds with the tradition and the teachings?

B2: Actually not. I feel that my inner guidance is very much in alignment with the traditional teachings. As a matter of fact, I used to sometimes reevaluate in where I am and what my spiritual practice is about, and also my connection to everything, to humanity, to my family, to Vajrayana and to *everything* that I'm so much entangled with, ten thousand phenomena. And I am always thankful to the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni, of course, first of all. And also I'm thankful to the Vajrayana, because Vajrayana Buddhism is the vehicle through which I received the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. Because culturally I was born in Tibet and raised there and introduced to the Vajrayana at a very early age. So Vajrayana was like the pipeline of Buddha dharma to me in this lifetime. And also I believe, wholeheartedly believe, that whatever I am experiencing I got here because of the Vajrayana. Otherwise I would not get here where I am with my spiritual practice.

MS: What age were you introduced to the Vajrayana?

B2: Oh, very young. Maybe eight or something like that. [laughs] I was one of those few children in my village that wanted to be a monk.

And usually many of the monks were sent by their parents to go to the monastery. But in my case I had to fight quite hard to get permission from my grandparents to go to the monastery. And they raised me, my grandparents.

MS: So this was an early instinct, a yearning that wouldn't go away.

B2: An early instinct, a yearning that was a very strong. A strong aspiration to go to the monastery. I saw the monastery as a beautiful garden, like paradise. And I liked the idea of becoming a meditator.

MS: So at the age of eight the monastery was this kind of...The yearning was for paradise.

B2: Oh yes. I felt that this was my life's mission. I was very clear about that, actually.

MS: And it represented paradise for you, this beautiful garden.

B2: Yes, like a place that was utterly like paradise, just completely amazing, totally amazing. [laughs]

MS: I'm wondering also, how does your inner guidance, does this innate trust, help you in knowing how to prioritize or decide upon or to begin or embody specific spiritual practices or orientations? So let's say, you know, how in the temporal realm of living your life, when you feel ready, or how you make decisions to work with a certain practice, or let's say, sadhana for yourself or your students.

B2: Oh yes, inner guidance, definitely. I rely so much heavily upon inner guidance than ever. It seems I'm more and more relying upon the inner guidance than ever. This is quite an enjoyable journey that I'm rising on, and I make lots of decisions these days based on my inner guidance.

MS: And is this from meditation and seeing what comes up in your mind's eye?

B2: Yes, I think from meditation, and also sometimes not even during meditation, the inner guidance shows up definitely. I'm very much realizing the inner guidance. And it's a very, very liberating experience to do that, definitely.

MS: And that might come spontaneously as a visual or as a thought?

B2: As awareness, as awareness. Not even thought, as awareness. And I believe that the more I trust in my inner guidance, the more I'm

getting close to more eternal union with my Buddha nature. Because inner guidance is all about recognizing your Buddha nature. It's all about going back and not getting lost further and further. It's all about making this big U-turn and coming back where we are, the Buddha. [laughs]

MS: [laughs] Inner guidance is a big U-turn, that's really nice.

B2: Yes, inner guidance is a big spiritual U-turn! [laughs]

MS: It's a boomerang we can trust.

B2: Yes. Coming back and to realize that everything's here. God is here, Buddha is here.

MS: Are you in a place in your life right now where you're trying to make any large decisions? And is there something you're currently going through where your inner guidance is helping you to make any decisions?

B2: Yes, actually. I was reflecting this very fundamental decision that is whether I should go back somewhere like East like Tibet or India or continue staying here and to teach the holy dharma. Or I go somewhere like East, either Tibet or India, perhaps. India not so much as Tibet, or could be Nepal too. So I had that very strong thought and to make that decision. So I made choice to stay here, actually.

MS: And how did you make that choice?

B2: I just felt that somehow there is a role that I should play where I am right now. And I somehow believe it. The inner guidance tells me that some of my role is going to help other people to realize that they're already Buddha. And my inner guidance tells me I should not give any other message except that. I should stuck with that message. If I stay with that same core message I will help people, I will not harm others. I will not harm their brain. [laughs] I will not harm their consciousness, and ultimately it will benefit myself too. Because it helps *me* realize my true nature as a Buddha if I keep delivering that same message again and again.

MS: And your urge to go back to India or Nepal or Tibet, what was that?

B2: That was actually, has to do with whether my role is really benefiting anybody here or not. That was a big question, because in many ways, you know, there's so much spiritual phenomena happening out west, there's so much of them. And there's so many teachers, there's so many sangha in the west. And I started thinking

about, "Should I continue teaching here in the west? Is it really a benefiting role or not? Are people ready to awake? Are people ready to hear such a message, which is the true dharma, kind of dropping everything up?" [laughs] And so I had to go back to listen to my inner guidance to get the answer, "Yes. People are ready."

MS: And how did that answer "Yes"...How did you recognize that? How did that come up?

B2: I think just this deep knowingness too. Not even words, it's not really words, but just this deep knowingness. You know sometimes, let me see...

MS: I know I keep coming back to this same question again and again...

B2: I know, this is the most important question, yes. It comes so much as determination. Determination, knowing that that's what we're supposed to be doing. And there's no fear, there's no doubt. You feel really, not really determined but, just a deep knowingness, yeah? A deep knowingness with joy. There's joy to that, a tremendous sense of joy. There's no fear. There's no longer a concern that you're going to fail.

MS: So we can recognize the authentic guidance when there's a quality of joyfulness and fearlessness.

B2: Yes, fearlessness. You're not worrying about not being successful, not to succeed at *anything*.

MS: Yes. And so when there's any aspect of fear or any tainting of the joy...

B2: Then you're not being guided by inner guidance. You're being guided by ego. That is my personal experience in my life.

MS: And that deep knowing quality, are there any other aspects to the deep knowing experience other than joyfulness or fearlessness?

B2: I think clarity. There's clarity. You know what you're doing. Clarity. That's what I will use, clarity. Like clear, everything's clarity. And you kind of know what you're doing. [laughs]

MS: Can you describe the experience of clarity?

B2: Clarity: I think you know exactly what you're doing. You know completely what you're doing.

MS: There's a confidence.

- B2:* Yes, there's a confidence. [laughs] For example, these days I'm teaching the Buddha dharma, and I know, I certainly know what I'm teaching. There's no self, and I'm basically asking everybody to go beyond this painful self.
- MS:* So the option of going back to the east...When you sat with that option there was not as much clarity, fearlessness or joyfulness.
- B2:* Yes. Not so much as if I'm going to stay here. [laughs] This is what I'm supposed to be doing according to my inner guidance. If I use that language.
- MS:* This is really my final question, and you've already touched upon this. Actually, it's a two part question. Have you noticed at any time during this interview that this inner guidance was operating? Did you draw upon your inner guidance in answering my questions?
- B2:* I think there's a sense of that, definitely. Yes. Yeah, definitely. A sense of that, too. Because I'm no longer concerned about what I've said, whether wrong or will this be useful or not. I said because I said. That is to me the clear expression of inner guidance. I said with my best knowledge and it is totally perfect to me.
- MS:* And there's no attachment to what you've said.
- B2:* There's no attachment to what I've said.
- MS:* And that's an indication of it being true inner guidance.
- B2:* Yes, that to me is inner guidance. When you are in union with inner guidance I think you're always fearless. You're no longer looking for any reward or some kind of achievement or success or being afraid of failure. No such thing as that state.
- MS:* And therefore there's no attachment to results.
- B2:* Yes, because there's no mistake. And all mistakes are a source of transformation, if there is one. If there is a mistake then they are a source of transformation. And maturity too.
- MS:* Which brings me to the second part of my final question which is, if you make use of a certain strategy, a certain means of tuning in to inner guidance, could I invite you now to answer my question of what that strategy is?
- B2:* That's a very good question. Yes, I think the method of tapping into the inner guidance, and sometimes you have to remind you that

you can trust in yourself and that's the way you can actually make the best decisions in your life. Trust in yourself and go beyond fear. As if a deity, a spirit, is reciting those exact words. You see? I think, imagine that spirit or deity is reciting those words. It will help you, yeah? If you say, "Let go of the fear, let go of the fear." And the same if you also recite this phrase in silence to yourself. And that helps very much. And also, sometimes I think reciting mantras help. But best of all is the silence, the pause. You just pause sometimes. And in the middle of the day you just pause sometimes. And when your mind is a little bit irritated by statics, [laughs] mental statics, you just pause for a while and pay attention to breath. And then you'll be in touch with the inner guidance.

MS: So a pausing, allowing for a little bit of silence, tuning in to the breath, and reminding yourself, even on the level of thought, to have no fear. And to imagine yourself as a deity.

B2: Yes. And trusting yourself, which is to remind yourself, "Trust in yourself." And I think when you even recite the phrase and something happens, magic happens. So to me, as I said earlier, "trusting oneself" is very precious words, something that you want to tell your children, your friends, and something that you want to tell everybody: trust in themselves. [laughs]

MS: Thank you, Rinpoche.

B2: Oh, thank you so much. You're welcome. I hope everything we did was beneficial to your work. This is a very good topic actually, you chose.

MS: Thank you.

B2: Amazing topic. Meaningful topic.

MS: It's of very urgent personal relevance to me. And I realized that in the literature that not many people have looked at this. And especially between different traditions. So of course in the west, part of the confusion of the spiritual marketplace is which flavor do I go for? That kind of thing. And so obviously within each tradition there are different perspectives. But across traditions my curiosity is, how do we help future practitioners better tune in to the essence of these traditions and not get too caught up in the different forms? You know, the different vessels, the different technologies. And so, these different traditions seem to be speaking towards the same phenomenon, but in such different languages, in such different cultural manifestations. And so few people have actually said, "This is what it was like for me," within each tradition. And hopefully the commonalities can arise more easily.

B2: Oh, yes, definitely. *Denpa*. In Tibetan, guide is called *denpa*, the guide, *denpa*. *Denpa*. *Denpa*. Usually Buddha is referred as *denpa*. Or your spiritual master as *denpa*. Means guide. But then the highest guru is alive within each of us, is the inner wisdom. Which can be called inner guidance. So to realize inner guidance means to realize your true nature. So it's not just only spiritual, this whole notion of realizing and tapping into inner guidance, but it has to be also the dharma teaches the way to the great liberation. So I think people should be taught how to be in touch with their inner guidance. And usually people tend to go for the outer guidance. So this is a new language, but very much needed for humanity. How to trust in your inner guidance when we vote for politicians, when we choose our spiritual teachers, and when we choose relationships. I think it's very much needed to trust our inner guidance. To choose work or to choose anything we have to trust in ourselves. And then there's no mistake. If we make mistake, so be it. So mistake, nothing wrong with mistakes.

MS: So a personal question of mine, and this is not really related to the dissertation, but something that you said was very helpful for me to hear. I'm wondering in the context of this discussion, about right relationship with the teacher. Especially in the Vajrayana, where I find myself. It's funny, because I'm trained to be a therapist and I've worked a lot with teenagers and children, and now with the elderly this year. And when I sit in that space of helping someone else try to tune into their own inner guidance, I feel relatively relaxed and confident. And, you know, anxiety comes and goes. But suddenly, when I'm in the position of being a student, the seeking, the poverty mentality comes in, and I get very self-conscious and overly formal and that false self comes up very strongly. And a question I have for you, Rinpoche, is how would you recommend that students who are in my kind of situation, how we can remain spontaneous and natural, but not overly casual, not presumptuous? Because at the same time, in your presence, I feel a tremendous honor. And I don't want to be casual and kind of like I would with a buddy. But also you have a way of making me feel very, very comfortable and at home, in a very deep part of home in myself. And so just in terms of the mundane level, how best to maintain the spontaneity and the inner trust, and also maintain the respectfulness where it's not the false...Do you know what I'm saying? The balance. Because if it's coming up for me a lot, then I'm sure for other practitioners, too. In other words, not wanting to be overly familiar, but also wanting to be natural.

B2: Yes. But that's I think a very thoughtful question. And it's good to have a sense of [pause] *reverence*. Not only to the dharma teachers, but also reverence to everything. But when we express reverence, that's a bit different in relationship to everything. If you want to show reverence to the dog, you really don't show the same kind of

reverence. We should not show the same kind of gesture of reverence to let's say somebody else the way we do to the dog. The dog, we will pet it. [laughs] But with people we don't pet them easily. Yeah? We don't pet them. So in that sense I think that it's good to have different gestures for expressing your sense of familiarity and trust in reverence. There are good different gestures, and every monastery has different gestures. In Tibet everybody performs this *mutca kornama skora metta*, when you join palms together. And also teachers also show the same reverence to the student as the student shows the reverence to the teacher. So all are showing a mutual expression of reverence. Then it's very beautiful, because reverence, really, the gesture helps remind ourselves to see somebody as Buddha nature. Somebody *is* Buddha in themselves. Which is, everybody's a Buddha in themselves in an ultimate sense. But those gestures of reverence helps us to instill the enlightened view in our consciousness. And not too excessive, even. Not too much, either. Moderation is the imperative, yeah?

MS: Ahh. The middle way in the gestures themselves.

B2: And sometimes people become very extreme. Extremist in the sense of being too casual, of being too whatever, too formal. But as long as there's no fear, then I think we always know what to do in each and every given moment. How we're supposed to hold ourselves.

MS: So in the absence of fear the proper gestures will naturally emerge.

B2: Yes. And I have so much gratitude to my teacher. If he walked into this room I would show the gesture of reverence even if I know he would not care. But it's just my way of showing my gratitude, because he showed me my Buddha nature. In the same way, if somebody gives you a precious gift you write letters, you write thanks letters, just like that in the western culture. But so, I always felt fearless around him. Fearless. I always felt total fearless around him. There's nothing inherent, intrinsic wrath in him towards anybody. There's nothing he's looking for from me. I felt such fearlessness around him. So that indicates that he's a true dharma teacher. So the way you decide who's a true dharma teacher is based on whether your mind is feeling lots of fear or not. If you have too much fear it means that person is not delivering the right message. And no matter, even if that person is worshipped by a thousand people, some another place, [laughs] a thousand devotees, it means the teacher is not real. [laughs]

MS: Thank you, Rinpoche.

B2: I think and I pray that this book is going to benefit others. And so through this work others can realize that there is a way to the inner

guidance. And inner guidance, we say "*inner*." Inner is always referring to our innermost of the being, our Tathagatagarbha, Buddha nature. So even to search for ways to inner guidance you are taking the right step in the right direction to the great awakening. This realization of your Buddha nature, your true nature. Inner. [laughs] It's self-empowerment. It's true spiritual empowerment. [laughs]

Interview with Shamanic/Buddhist Practitioner [S/B]

[At outset of interview, interviewee asks if it is OK for him to take a toke of a marijuana joint, which upon interviewer's consent he proceeds to do.]

MS: How did you initially come to locate or identify this source or process of what I'm calling "inner guidance" in your life? Do you remember the earliest time when an inkling of what inner guidance may be to you now was manifest or in effect?

S/B: Well, I'm not sure if one identifies it as inner guidance when you're young, but in my case certain occasions occurred where it was unmistakable that things were happening that were really different than what was happening around me. So those differences occurred in voice manifestations when I was young, 6 or 7 or 8 years of age, and those voice manifestations told me that there were certain things that were going to happen in my life and that I had to follow a particular pathway to allow those things to happen. Now, *I have no fucking idea* how you discover that that voice is right or not except to view it along the path. And I have no idea as to whether that voice is coming from an outside source or an inside source or a quote "spiritual source," or your organic source, your brain itself. Of course, there is a great question as to whether these voices are just coming out of your brain, your manifestation of your brain. Or is it coming from an outside source or a plant or water, or anything like that. And then I think it's a question of development of a belief system around that organization. So for instance, my wife, who is a great neuroscientist, does not believe that a plant will give you a word or a thought or an idea or a view or a picture. She thinks those are already in the brain already. And all this particular plant does is edge that particular thing to come out. Whereas I think the prayers of Vajrayana or shamanic representation can allow those things *in* and you follow them. In other words, they are coming from an outside source. So I guess that's an over-expanded space, but...

MS: The outside source from the Vajrayana would also be from a potentially nonsentient being, like a plant or a...

S/B: Exactly, a non-sentient being. You know, you see the brocades of the Vajrayana as they create a stupa. Not a stupa, but a mandala. And you see all of these pieces and they've somehow crystallized it or organized it into form. And then you can take their form and just blow it away, you know. Or just scrape it up from the ground and just throw it into the river or into the ocean. It's just a nothingness

coming from an emptiness coming into a form. And then you visualize it for the moment that you visualize it and then you see how it works together. And that's how Vajrayana is constructed or how it's defined. But I think the same thing happens in a shamanic course. I think the same thing happens as an outside light or outside vision. It's identified along the path by multitudinous numbers of sequences, which says, "I'm right." So I think even in the Vajrayana course the stability of the mandala allows you to say, "I'm right."

MS: So the stability itself of an insight lends veracity or authenticity to it.

S/B: Right, because you can't get it from any place else. You can get it if you allow yourself to be released to a teacher. In other words, I take refuge in a teacher and that teacher will teach me *the way*. And I'm secure in the format my teacher already has and he will be my guru through the way, whether it be shamanism or whether it be Vajrayana or anything else. That didn't particularly occur to me until very late in life.

MS: Which part didn't occur to you?

S/B: A teacher of any sort. I just followed a pathway that was laid out and delineated for me. And this voice would tell me whether I was on it or I wasn't on it.

MS: So going back to the chronological bit, you were saying at the age of seven or eight you started receiving voices of guidance?

S/B: One particular voice, that I knew that was correct; somehow knew that it was correct.

MS: Can you say more about the actual experiencing of this?

S/B: Well, the experience was a voice coming up saying that I had to take a particular course in life that would have to go very rapidly, get me to certain particular place, because my father would die at a specific time and if I didn't make it I would have to take care of my family and I would not have the rights to do what I wanted to do. So I followed that pathway and that was the correct pathway.

MS: So what was it like to receive this voice? Was it shocking?

S/B: Shocking. It was shocking. But it has an authority to it that there's no argument to it. And it's very, very strange.

MS: So in this first instance of this voice with a complete authority and clarity -- this was a voice that was different external voices.

S/B: Different than any voice that I'd ever experienced before. And this is happening at 6, 7 or 8. And I don't know how I developed the certainty or gained the certainty that that voice was correct, except in retrospect.

MS: And it was a kind of didactic voice saying this is what you have to do?

S/B: A laid out pathway, a laid out pathway. Just shoo-shoo-shoo-shoo, right on down the line. And it's really, really interesting, when I went over the tractor 12 years ago, that same voice came on and showed me a whole series of pictures and ways of being and breathing and how to get off the tractor and how to live.

MS: The same voice.

S/B: Same voice.

MS: Maybe we can come back to the tractor incident a little bit later and unpack it a bit?

S/B: Sure, sure.

MS: Because I'm interested still in when you were very young. What were the instances surrounding the voice coming?

S/B: Well, I think the circumstances around it were coming from absolute abject poverty in New York City. And this may be the emblem of first generation people that come to America, but I was born in 1939 out of a group of Jewish people who, my father and mother, were very petrified by what was going on in Europe. And one begins to identify in life from a very, very early state as to who's your friend and who's not your friend. Or who am I afraid of or who am I not afraid of, and why should I be afraid of, and what is all these things that I'm being told, and why are the people killing people and doing what they're doing? And that's occurring until 1945, into 5 years of age, so you become very alert, very rapidly. And America doesn't go into the war until 1944 and you wonder why your president isn't taking you into war to fight to save hundreds of thousands, millions of people. So it's a time when you're very mentally and psychologically being drifted or torn apart and pulled back together again. Now what's happening here and still not happening there and the fear and you're riding an edge, a psychological edge, but you don't know you're doing that because you're coming from people that don't understand that.

MS: So your receptivity of the fertile soil for this voice just kind of emanating -- was that fear, confusion, desperation?

- S/B:* I think it was probably fear, confusion, desperation and how I'm going to make it in this country.
- MS:* So was there a supplication on your part? Not necessarily praying, but sort of asking for clarity and hoping for some response to a call?
- S/B:* No, no, no, no. I, like most Jewish kids, was being put into school after school where you learn Hebrew and things like that and being trained for your bar mitzvah or whatever, and so you were learning some of the fundamental of Judaism. I kept looking at this great supposed God and He allows these things to happen to his chosen people. You know, who is this monster and why won't he talk to me? So I was looking for someone, something to talk to me.
- MS:* So there was a searching. And when the voice came did you experience that voice as God?
- S/B:* No, it was a voice that didn't have any identification. I couldn't identify with it. And it was fearful at first. Especially this type of information. And difficult to interpret. So difficult to manifest or...But it was what it was.
- MS:* Did it come as an immediate download, like a sermon, or in little packets of information?
- S/B:* It just came as a, like as a little speech. "[Says his first name], this is how it's going to be, this is how it's going to be, this is how it's going to be..." It was very interesting. And to know it was right at that time has always bothered me. How did you know this thing is right and why did you follow this particular pathway?
- MS:* But you also had never experienced any competing voices like that.
- S/B:* No, never. It was also very clear.
- MS:* And it was the only one, so there were no other ones to distract you.
- S/B:* Well, the external ones. The external voices around you are training you to number one, not look like the people you came from so that you can look like an American. Da-da, da-da, da-da, da-da..."Don't do anything wrong." This was totally out of character with that.
- MS:* So even at this age you took this to be an inner, a qualitatively different kind of voice.
- S/B:* Yeah.

MS: And you recognized it as such and the guidance it gave you in the relative domain of, "Do this, do this, do this," to free you from your socioeconomic trappings?

S/B: Exactly. "Go here, go here, go here. Even though you don't like this, go here, go here, go here...Even though you don't like this, go here, go here, go here...Even though you don't like this, do this."

MS: For your material responsibilities, so as to free you up eventually from those even.

S/B: Exactly.

MS: So it seemed to be in service of freedom and individuation?

S/B: Ha! You've got to laugh at individuation because the character was supported by individuation even though it was a pathway that was one of...Always, always, always, always sought itself to be individual, not like the pack.

MS: Interesting. And this is coming when all the external voices were basically encouraging you to be part of the pack.

S/B: Exactly. Remember, this is a time when everything's switching, everything's moving. You know, you're hearing, the music switched to rock and roll, eventually if you were just coming out of your teens, and all sorts of crazy things are happening in life. You're coming out of a war, money's coming to education in a certain kind of way, and you're going through huge systems. I was born in New York City, so the average class was like 60,000 or something like that. And so you're not going to a very fancy school, but a school that put out [name of renowned physician] and people like that. So you're getting immense privilege in a huge space in a very, very competitive world and being taught all the rules of competition. So the tendency is to shape-shift yourself and fabricate yourself as one of those. So you learn very early what I call chameleonization. Because it was after, so I think it was also the embedment, if there is such a word, the embedding of a character who is not only chameleon-like, but is empathic. In other words, I think I'm an empath. I mean, if we put it in psychological terms, I can see, feel, touch be with you and know you instantaneously.

MS: And at this age, were you trying to make sense of this through your Judaic studies?

S/B: I was trying to make sense of this in every way I possibly could, but it didn't stop the steering of the path. Some people try to make sense of it by trying to go to a psychologist or psychiatrist. Well I

did all those things. But it didn't stop the path. The pathway was always a direct pathway from those voices early.

MS: So, I was going to ask, has guidance taken different ways of showing or revealing itself? But you were saying that this voice came many times, even before the tractor incident?

S/B: No, no, no. It just put me on the path. And then the path was steered out for me. Whatever was there I would grab it. 12 years of age I'm sitting in Washington Park down in Greenwich Village and this guy Joe or something says, "Hey, you ever tried this?" And I said, "What are you talking about?" And it was a dried peyote button. And we all munched a dried peyote button and the whole world changed. And I have no idea why I did that or why I tried that, but my work changed immediately and I never would touch anything like that again for the longest of times. So I think they were placed in a certain place at a particular time for me to see something in a particular way and then for me to say, "No, no, no, no I'm going to go that way. I'm going to be this organized guy that looks exactly like this. I'm going to look like a surgeon," which is what I became. And that surgeon has to look, he has to wear a coat and have a moustache and have a stethoscope around his neck in a certain way and be convincing if you're going to take off somebody's leg or another part of the body. So it has to be in this organized framework. So I could see these frames very easily and step into it.

MS: So I'm trying to now reconcile the voice, the sort of initiatory voice of guidance, and the path itself. So the voice seemed to put you on a path, and once on the path, the path revealed itself by simply any obstacles to your unique destiny unfolding...

S/B: Exactly, exactly.

MS: How did you know when it was the path or not the path, for you?

S/B: The voice told me to *run* really fast. So I went through high school in two years and I went through college in three years and when I applied to medical school the guys wanted to go a specific pathway and that was not the pathway that was chosen, and I applied to eight medical schools in the New York state area and was refused from them. And as I stepped out the door with this wound, to begin to do something I really loved to do, and that was studying philosophy under a Nietzschean and Kierkegaardian, and I really loved them and was going to study under her. But as I walked out the door, literally, up the college with my dismissal in my hand, a guy came up to me and asked, "What happened, did you get in?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Have you ever tried osteopathic school?" And I said, "What the hell is that?," never hearing about it

my dreams. He said, "You can practice medicine in any state and anything you want to do and the same thing as a regular doctors does." So I studied a little a bit about them, applied to one osteopathic school in [name of state] there was only one, and I was immediately accepted. So I took off from New York City, never knowing anything about traveling or anything. I went to this osteopathic school, which is where the founder founded the school. I have no idea why this was chosen for me. But I knew that this where I was supposed to go.

MS: And how did you know at these different junctures? Because there was no voice confirming at this point.

S/B: Because everybody else would say, "What the hell you doing this for? What's this all about?" And I'd know inside that I was doing the right thing.

MS: OK, so there was an anomalous aspect, it kind of came out of the blue. But there was also this confirmation that came from deep inside that said, it's not just because it's from left field, there's something that rings true.

S/B: Something that rings true.

MS: What was the experience like of that certainty inside of you? Was it a somatic one? How do you recognize the authentic and discern that from the false?

S/B: Well, I think first it has to be one of psychological confidence. Which I have the ability to do, to test things out. In other words, later in life I found Vajrayana, so that gave me recognition about how those things are formed. But I didn't know that at that time that I was a practitioner of Vajrayana at that particular point and I could take what came out of emptiness and construct it into whatever the form would be. But I did it and I could recognize it easily, and then I could morph into whatever form that was needed for this particular thing. I knew I could morph very easily. In fact, I was very, very concerned about the morphing form because people would come to me for advice at that particular time, older people. And I dissected out what was wrong, told them to do a certain thing. And I said, "This is crazy man, this is absolutely crazy, that you can do these things and dissect these things." I thought, "You better find out who you really are." So I went to a psychiatrist for a year. [laughs] And I needed to feel safe and talk this out to somebody, because there was nobody around that I could say this to. So I spent a year under her and it helped me sort things out in what I would call an American plane, an English plane. A form of how I knew what I knew what I knew and it was right. And I didn't have to be afraid of it. First when I recognized it I became

fearful, because it was like, "This is how to, you should marry this girl. You should do this." Something like that." And I didn't have any fucking idea who you are. But I was right, back then. So I didn't know how that happened. I mean, it was really crazy making for me, and I was recognized for it by the people around me.

MS: So your experience for being a channel of certainty, an articulate channel of a sort of true destiny of others, did this seem to be a separate capacity or gift than the voice that would come? And was this also available for your own life?

S/B: No, it wasn't available for my own life. My own life was an obstacle course. An obstacle course of danger and dread and darkness. And then meeting the danger and dread and darkness and overcoming it and landing on my two feet.

MS: And was there trial and error there, or were the obstacles clearly recognizable? Was it just like, "This is my hurdle now and I've got to jump it," or was there a whole lot of bumping up against...

S/B: It was always, "This is my hurdle now and jump it."

MS: So getting back to the psychological confidence. When you feel this recognition that this is truth for me and this is a hurdle that is worthy of my attention, of working through for my destiny, you said that there was a psychological confidence, right, that would help you know.

S/B: The right path to take.

MS: Can you say more about that? The psychological confidence and going to the psychiatrist?

S/B: Well, I think the psychiatrist, first of all, was just to deal with the confusion.

MS: Of having such confidence. [laughs]

S/B: Of having such confidence. [laughs]

MS: Such clarity.

S/B: Such clarity. Because again, if you don't have a teacher, if you don't have a teacher there really is quite a bit of worry, at least in my place, whether you're crazy or not, OK? And you don't even know that Vajrayana's out there or shamanism's out there or any teacher out there.

MS: How old were you at this point when you went to the psychiatrist?

S/B: 19.

MS: And this really became your teacher, the psychiatric framework.

S/B: The framework. What was the name of the great psychiatrist down in San Diego? Anyway, it was a framework of psychiatry, inquiry. Where you could go in and out and establish what was happening to you. I mean, she barely said a word and she would lead you through these pathways. And it was a pathway that was very, very good for me and allowed me to look at my life as I was following my life through it. So she gave me a framework that allowed me to see things and whether they were right or wrong.

MS: So the framework helped you ferret out inconsistencies. It was a logical...

S/B: Well, like I said, there was a lot of darkness. Because they would say, "No you can't do this." And there I was doing this, most of the time.

MS: The culture was saying, "No you can't do this."

S/B: The culture, academia, and the places I would go to. For instance, I was led into a residency in Fort Worth, Texas, when I came out of Kirksville, MO. And that residency was in orthopedic surgery when I wanted hand surgery, and I ended up doing trauma surgery. But it was like ch, ch, ch, ch, ch some kind of... And then I went to a place where they said I couldn't do things I wanted to do. And I stayed there, in Fort Worth, Texas, and that was a place that all of a sudden there was 18 people signed up for a medical school that didn't exist. And somebody asked me to become a clinical dean and I became a clinical dean and built a curriculum. And I didn't even know how to build a curriculum. And I didn't even know why I took that job.

MS: But in retrospect there seems to be some kind of logic to your evolution. In retrospect, how did these different stages, these different obstacles, seem to have relevance to your life's journey?

S/B: Some of them were negative and some of them were positive, OK? The negative ones, obviously, hurt a lot and the positive ones seemed to make it OK. Unfortunately, some of the positive ones were lies, OK? Or constructions. I built a whole family based on a construction. That I was a white Anglo-Saxon person and I had four adopted children in that framework and lived in a large palatial house with Mercedes Benzes and golf clubs in the back and all that stuff. And it was just a visual I'd seen one time or in movies

or whatever and I built that system. Not thinking that I didn't really belong in that system. And when I finally found out that a liar was living a liar's lie, I couldn't live it any longer. So I had to dismember the whole thing.

MS: I guess what I'm wondering here, and it's kind of like John Coltrane playing around a melody line...

S/B: Exactly, following the melody line.

MS: In this case I was thinking more about Coltrane playing all the notes *around* a melody so that the melody is revealed by what's *not* played. And we're sort of working around a theme here too. So I guess what's coming up for me now is, whether it be in retrospect or whether it be at the time, that all of these obstacles, whether positive or negative, were in some way honing your sense of what? What was the guidance in service of? Truth, authenticity, unfolding of personal destiny?

S/B: Well, there were moments when I could see certain things happening, OK? Like all of a sudden I realized one time that in a study of light and motion that my hands were working totally independent of me. So I queried that. Now why would I even query? Well I did. I queried it because in surgery I was listening to rock music, I was talking to residents, I was asking questions of interns, and I was making jokes to the anesthesiologist, and my hands were working all the time. I found out that 60% of the time a surgeon's eye is not even on the field. 40% of the time it's on the field. That's why the lights are green and blue on the outside. To rest you from 6,000 angstroms coming right into your eye. So all of a sudden I realized, "My God. My hands, they're working independently of me." And then I began accepting that. Because that's a hard one to accept. That these could work independently of my mind. So I didn't know if that was fact or foolish, and I didn't have anyone to talk to about that.

MS: So bringing these together...Whatever was guiding your hands, without conscious awareness, whatever was guiding your *life*, what was it in the service of? Was it becoming increasingly empathic? Or increasingly shedding lies so what was remaining was truth? Or healing? In other words, if there's guidance there almost seems to be a relational sense to it. Guidance towards what? Who is guiding whom, but also in service of what?

S/B: Well, Matthew, you know, I think at first you don't understand the path. At least, I didn't understand the path. Or like you would end up in a lot of places. The shamanic world being taught by various teachers, you don't know what you're being taught. And you don't know how to follow a particular thing, the first time you see a

ritual, or drink a particular kind of concoction, or what's going to happen. You expand by the utilization of your mind. And sometimes something comes and says, "I don't want to be there. I just don't want to be there, I don't want to be with this thing." And so maybe that's the voice again speaking from a different voice. But I took the full professorship of surgery, chairman of the department, and threw it all away. To go seeking who I was. It was very painful to be in a body I had constructed by taking the wrong road.

MS: The right road, which you're calling path, is toward what?

S/B: Well, it was towards being more *me*.

MS: Ahh. Can you say more about that.

S/B: Well, whoever, whatever these constructs were along the way, as I examined them, went through them, whether it be a voice or a contour or somebody contouring the edges of this being, would all of a sudden have a psychological inquiry. An inquiry would occur and I would discover in this inquiry, in this look at who I was in that particular moment, that, "No, no, no, no, this is not supposed to be me, I can't be me, this is not me." And, "Something's wrong here, something's really, really wrong here." So probably the first step along the way was somebody had brought a friend, he'd brought a particular drug called MDMA, Ecstasy, in the early seventies, in California. And me and another person tried this particular thing and all of a sudden every coat that I had glommed onto myself disappeared. And there I was, naked in the sun. And being naked in the sun I could see easily that whoever this person was I could see easily wasn't me. So the first thing I did was a study of, I thought, "Something's wrong here. I have to reply with something organized because this is really disorganized." So I wrote a study on male middle life crisis, one of the first studies on it. And I did the study on doctors to see whether they realized that they were going through a crisis or not at that particular age. So I inquired at that place and found out that not many people really realized or recognized that they were going through it.

MS: How old were you at this point?

S/B: Let's see...It was the seventies. I'm 68 now. I had to be 37, 38. And I had had a particular thing happen to me at 33. I had had a major accident where my spine completely was closed off and I couldn't walk. And I had my, so to speak, my death experience. I had complete compression in the cord, which means you're never going to walk again. So at 33 I had that accident and I have no idea how I had it. I phoned the mayo clinic and got operated on by a guy who

never had more than two. I came out and I trained myself to walk again and I started running marathons.

MS: You don't know how the accident happened?

S/B: I don't know how it happened. Over a period of time I lost my legs and all kinds of other stuff. It was just really weird. And somehow I had won myself back over that period of time. And also I was teaching and building a medical school at that time. And also I was operating and trying to be the best surgeon around at that time. And also at that time I was building a family with four children, all of whom were adopted. And so I was always doing lots of things and in the middle of that took MDMA. And in the middle of that found out that all those lots of things were wrong. They were not really me. And the only course was to give them up. The only course to find me was to give it all up. The entire charade. So I cut myself off from that entire charade. And the male middle life crisis study taught me that 45% of the people who went through it didn't recognize it. Or did in some little bump in their life and they just stayed who they were. Another 35% of them changed themselves and were unrecognizable to those around them and did all kinds of severities to those around them. And they were usually remarried and they had two sets of kids and shit like that. And the other 20% of them, or whatever, kind of jumped off and were lost to follow-up. So I began to see who was lost to follow-up. Because they were more interesting than the ones who could be identified. And I decided to become one of those lost to follow-up. And I just kind of jumped off the edge in trust that I was going to find what I could become and be.

MS: So the true path revealed itself as that which would encourage you to surrender false constructions of identity. And by trusting to that path you would trust that whatever was remnant was somehow the true you.

S/B: Exactly.

MS: Interesting.

S/B: So all of a sudden my wife and I were called to be presenters at Esalen on the use of MDMA and various other things. And we had written something on the use of MDMA in male middle life crisis. And we were called to Esalen, and there I was with all the big dudes in psychiatry utilizing substance in a room. And I remembered, backwards, that the voice had said, "Man, I'd like to be on the top of that apartment house with the rest of the rich people in New York City. I'd like to be in that class." And here I was with the top dogs in psychiatry. Stan Grof, and da da da da da, presenting. And I had no idea how I had gotten there. But I was in

the right place with the right people who taught me the right things. Who nudged me off the cliff and said, "Hey, you got to try this Tibetan form of Buddhism, man, it's kind of interesting, man, it's kind of interesting stuff." And then I would see Claudio Naranjo telling me that in the meditative state you could reach these states utilizing certain practices like Vajrayana. Well, I trusted Claudio Naranjo, and why I trusted him I have no idea. But he was a good person to trust. And I trusted Stansilav Grof, and why I trusted him I have no idea. Ralph Metzner, I trusted him, and I have no idea why I trusted him. And these people were more familiar to my path than anybody I had ever met in my life. And John Lilly. And they became my teachers. And I was very fortunate that these people became my teachers, because I would say that this was a very, very wild being. Wild mind, wild being. And they showed me the ways to work that wild being. Not tamp it down, but to work it and to train it to work in a fabric that was acceptable. Acceptable to me and acceptable to those people around me. And to the people that came my way.

MS: And it served as an increasingly true experience of yourself.

S/B: Exactly. Exactly. So I could see who I was very clearly at that particular moment in time. And then the practice of becoming that and doing that, and doing that practice, from that period of time is what I've always followed. So it wasn't always alone. Occasionally I went to south America and went with a shaman down there or found one up here and da da da da da da da. But always, always, always, always, never subjugating myself to one particular teacher.

MS: And what seemed to become of your experience of not following any particular teacher was an innate sense of trust.

S/B: An inner trust.

MS: And one of being recognized for the true aspects of yourself.

S/B: Exactly.

MS: And this voice, which had this lasting impression...Has there been a developmental aspect in regards to your inner guidance in regards to trust, kinds of information, its ways of appearing? You mentioned the tractor incident and the same voice coming.

S/B: Well, I would say that by following the various teachers in Vajrayana Buddhism and considering the various teachings that I've gone to and empowerments, certainly there's been a developmental aspect of it. Of me. It was the only way I think I could squeeze me [laughs] into me. It gave me more of a construct of a me.

MS: I don't understand.

S/B: Well, the teachers would teach certain aspects of being-ness or of non-being-ness that I was or I wasn't. So I could look at that. They had a structure, an organized form, a mandala. That I could take and work with. And when I worked with that, I could walk out the door and do more of a me. Saying a mantra. Or let's say I had an empowerment and a *lung* for the Medicine Buddha, which gave me the right to utilize the particular prayer of the Medicine Buddha, which I had no idea of before. Though I would say that was a developmental aspect of me. And a structure and an organization of pulling that in.

MS: Larger and larger spheres of identification. Less constricting ones.

S/B: Exactly. The mere picture of the Medicine Buddha is not enough. The extension of it is what I'm interested in, or what seems to be the appropriate thing for me.

MS: And has there been a developmental aspect to your ability to recognize guidance as it arises? To recognize your true path, more consistently perhaps?

S/B: Well, I would like to say so. Because one of the questions I have is that if that's true, "What am I doing in this crippled state? Why didn't you find it beforehand?" OK? So I would like to say I chose right all the time. But I didn't. I made mistakes. So one of the mistakes I had was talking to my daughter and trying to talk to her about a confrontation she was having with her mother, who I was no longer married to. And I slipped and fell off the back of a tractor and hit my chin on a wheel and immediately knew I was paralyzed from my neck down as I hung over what's known as the three-point hedge on the back of the tractor. I couldn't feel my arms, couldn't feel my legs, and I couldn't breathe. And I immediately knew that I was paralyzed and couldn't do anything and knew that I was going out. And I had an instantaneous review of my life. I was 56. And as that review went through, I was ready to let go, and Padmasambhava came on in bright colors and started directing me in breathing through my nose, feeling through the first cell of my nose, which is a particular meditation that I do. And then I could feel my diaphragm, and then I could talk, and then he gave me a complete set of pictures of how to come off the tractor, which were totally the antithesis of everything I knew medically. And there were six women here who got me off the tractors, including my wife. And I asked them to pull on my arms, or pull on my arms in a particular way that Padmasambhava had showed me, and pull on my neck. And I came back. My neurological signs came back. And then I crawled up this driveway up to this house and walked into

the house on Thanksgiving Day in 1994. And then I didn't let anybody see me for three months. Like I didn't go to any doctors or anything like that. I went back to work seeing people, healing people. Which has always been an experiment, anyway. And in three months I had to have an operation and I followed that operation course down the line since that time. And trying to still heal people along the way. So anyway, so that voice and pictures and slideshow. Totally the antithesis of what you'd do medically. And knowing fully that if we did the medical way, I'd be dead. And my wife and I had total communication with it psychologically. We both knew that this was the way to go, without talking about it.

MS: And this had nothing to with the psychological confidence. It was trust. Trust in the guru as the guru manifested.

S/B: Trust in the guru's manifestation.

MS: Had your mind worked in that slide show fashion before?

S/B: Never.

MS: So it wasn't as if Padmasambhava was saying, "This is a means that is familiar to you, I'm going to use this type of means." It was a new kind of media download.

S/B: New download. So I think my thing has been, most of my life has been to walk this tight rope. And I've fallen off the tightrope several times, very severely.

MS: Though it seems that the voice had come unbidden with the early voice, then the slideshow at similar times of urgency when either your physical or psychological sense of self was at great risk or great vulnerability.

S/B: Great risk. Great vulnerability. Always with great risk and great vulnerability.

MS: So at 6 you could have been destined to be one of the herd, and this voice snaps you out of that. With the tractor you could have been dead and it snapped you out of that constriction.

S/B: And there are other periods where I was shot and bullets hit my hands and face and bullets stopped in my maxillary sinus and didn't go up into my brain. Other stories like that that are smaller stories. [laughs]

MS: Did guidance arise in those situations?

- S/B: Yeah. Guidance arose in those situations as far as how to survive.
- MS: How to survive. But how for your *true* self to survive, not just physically.
- S/B: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Not physical survival. It's always been my true self. It's been this difficult, difficult, dark, dark pathway defining my true self.
- MS: Have you ever worked to try to supplicate or call upon guidance when not in a place of survival need? Almost out a sense of abundance and curiosity? Have you called upon guidance or has guidance arisen *unbidden* at times, when it *hasn't* been crucial to your survival?
- S/B: I think I call on the guidance when I'm working with people. When I'm working with people I always open the doors for the guidance and the teachers that I've been with and the Buddhas that I work with. And the various, well lots of people. First of all, I've never called myself anything other than a doctor. So I've always been in the room with people independently of calling myself anything, and *they* call me a healer or a shaman. And when they do, most of the time I am so embarrassed and fearful and frightened that I don't know, it's like some little child hiding out behind and afraid to come out. At least most of the time. So I put out a table, I put it in Santa Rosa. I mean, if people wanted to come to be healed, the trick was to come to me, to find me, to sit underneath my hands and let go. And then they would go out and tell another, tell another, tell another. So I've never advertised. And I've built up a huge, huge practice of people. Some of who see spirits around me. I don't see spirits around me. They see a series of seven. They confirm it by saying these are the spirits they see around me. They see this or this or this or that.
- MS: You said a series of seven?
- S/B: Seven spirits they usually see. They see colors when I'm working on them. And they see various mists and oils being applied to their body. Which I am not doing. I'm just putting my hands on their body. Now I live at the end of a road, [laughs] where I'm supposed to live, right, because shamans live at the end of the community. You have to find me, OK. I have no idea how I got up here or how people find me. Just like Mircea Eliade wrote about the standard shaman. I didn't try to do this. I'm broken and people still come. I raise my prices and they *still* come. So first of all, I think it's for the others to determine whether you are one of these things or not. In other words, I really believe it's in the eyes of the beholder or patient to find crazy people like me. Who are not so crazy. Who heal them, OK? Who utilize different techniques. Call in spirits, call

in gods and goddesses, call in the directions, call in whatever I need to fix them. Chewing gum, if I needed it; patch them up with chewing gum. And I saw the guys doing that in South America. Take a plant here, take a plant here, take a plant here and patch somebody here. And somehow I know that this is what is good for this particular person. And it works most of the time.

MS: And the guidance seems to be flawless most of the time because it's in service of healing?

S/B: Yes, it has a high percentage of non-failures.

MS: Because of the healing context.

S/B: Right, people walk out of here un-maimed.

MS: OK. So in healing others...I'm trying to see how your guidance for others is related to the guidance from the universe for *you*. It's that similar context of being in service of the other person's, like yours, true self emerging as the goal.

S/B: Well, first of all I try to get rid of whatever the dimensions and organizations of mind and self are.

MS: So first get rid of all of the constructions.

S/B: Get rid of all of the constructions. And then any information that comes into me has to be the other's, OK, the patient's.

MS: So let me see if I understand. You identify with the role of doctor because the doctor aspect of you is what's getting rid of the externalities. But where the shaman or the healer takes over is their voice, their guidance coming through.

S/B: Their voice, their guidance.

MS: And you're a vessel for their guidance.

S/B: Or, the spirit being of whom I'm particularly working with.

MS: And yet you're still the shy, awed onlooker.

S/B: I'm awed most of the time.

MS: So you're a vessel for their guidance?

S/B: Well, I wouldn't say that I'm a vessel for their guidance specifically, but I would say that I'm a vessel. And I do a particular ritual every month with a group of men with a particular plant, and that plant

has for *me* a particular goddess that works with me. Independently of whether I'm working with the plant or not. And I make space for her to move in.

MS: And are you speaking of ayahuasca here?

S/B: I'm speaking of *mimosa hostilis*. I'm not trained by her [ayahuasca]. I love it [ayahuasca], it's great, it took me away from smoking cigarettes.

MS: I don't understand. You say you're not trained?

S/B: I'm not trained in utilizing ayahuasca. I don't use it. I use a particular other thing.

MS: And what distinguishes you being trained or not trained?

S/B: Well, I think having a master train you. And I didn't have a master train me in this particular plant. There is no master in this plant. Nobody knows it. [laughs] So again, just step out of the way.

MS: Because I'm also interested in ayahuasca.

S/B: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I think there are people who are trained in the ritual use of it and go for the training. I'm not built to be one of those people.

MS: But as a practitioner, someone who has received guidance from her, that is a familiar space for you.

S/B: Yes, and that's because I use a particular other plant that people say is similar.

MS: Can you describe your work with these plants? You've mentioned the Vajrayana a bit, and how that's been helpful. How about with the plant medicines and with the plants spirits? As far as clarifying guidance in your life, how that might be... Your gifts might be applicable for others, but also as far as revealing the path more for you?

S/B: One has to, I think, submit themselves, supplicate themselves, to a particular order or organization. And my supplication came by utilization of a particular plant and being there with nine others who ritualistically do this thing on a regular basis. Which gives an organization and a reason for being there, doing the same practice that this plant is teaching you all the time. So I went for the plant teaching to the plant itself rather than going to the master, the maestro, who can teach you the plant teaching. The reason I did

that is because no one knew about this particular plant and what its teachings were.

MS: And what is this plant called again?

S/B: *Mimosa hostilis*. A lot of people say that it's like ayahuasca, but it's not. It has some similarities to it, but it's not. And so it talks to me in a particular way. This goddess comes into me when I'm touching someone and I can anchor into a space and everything helps this person out who's underneath my hands. And people come from near and far, from all over the place, to have this thing happen. So eventually, I guess, I think the plant is really at the center of the Vajrayana experience, you know. It's coming from the center of the mandala.

MS: For you, personally.

S/B: For my personal guidance.

MS: Interesting, interesting. So reconciling the two different paradigms, the shamanic and the Vajrayana, the mandala...

S/B: Is the container.

MS: And in the center of the mandala, that central node is the goddess revealed...

S/B: For me, for me. And the way I reconcile that is that the center of the mandala for me is the space of right hand brain. Which I have no cognitive knowledge of or organization of. And it's also the center of the mandala, is the space of receiving something which I know nothing of. For me, it's when people say, "Go out and find your feminine self." That's the center of the mandala, for me, and that's the center of receiving. It has no illustration or organization of what a female looks like.

MS: And as soon as the mandala starts crystallizing out of the center, that's left brain.

S/B: Exactly. As soon as you're out of the center of that you are in left brain and you're in organization and trying to find out what it's all about.

MS: And you're no longer receptive.

S/B: It evaporates right-hand brain. Evaporates it. Just totally doesn't give it a chance anymore.

MS: So when you say the plant's at the center of the mandala for you, I'm hearing that there's also a dialogic process with the plant. Or is it simply receptivity?

S/B: Well, sometimes there's dialogue and sometimes it's just happening. Sometimes things that I can't do happen. Like play harmonica or sing a song, or I begin having a voice.

MS: Does your voice and the plant's voice ever contradicted one another? This is in the larger context of my curiosity of working with external teachers or with certain teachings or practices or literatures. Have you ever felt your own source of guidance internally come into conflict with these external modes? And the same with the plant...

S/B: Never.

MS: Always in harmony.

S/B: Always in harmony.

MS: So you've never had to discern between authentic inner and outer when both sources seem to appear?

S/B: Well, Matthew, the question is *what is* authenticity. [laughs]

MS: Yes, please.

S/B: [laughing] You hear so many people talking about this and talk about that. And they're this kind of person and they're that kind of person. And they're authentic. And you can go to fifty million shaman courses and twenty million trips to the jungle and learn this way of doing ayahuasca, da da da da. What the hell is authentic anymore? So you have to choose something that means structuring and talking to you who is your identity or where your identity comes from. So I chose the center of the mandala. Because it's...I can't get a grip of it. I can't get a hold of it. I can become anything. I can become you, Matthew, in a second, if I wanted to cut you open. Or take care of you. But I don't do that anymore, because I don't need to do that anymore. Because the plant tells me I don't have to do that. It tells me I'm a Maestro. So I don't have to do that anymore. Now I can't accept, I would never accept the fact that I was a maestro, because I don't know what that means.

MS: Don't have to do what anymore?

S/B: Cut you open to find you. Trick you. Do all kinds of, play the role of the sycophant, you know, or whatever it is. Carl Rogers was the psychiatrist's name. She was a Rogerian. I did remember his name.

Thank you, brain, for coming back on. Rogers taught me a way of really dealing with my life in a very, very, very good way.

MS: I think for Rogers the holy trinity is unconditional positive regard, empathy, and authenticity.

S/B: Exactly, exactly, exactly. So most of the theory or form I'm talking, expressing to you about, is from that. That one year with a psychiatrist. She was a Rogerian, she was his student. So that's where all this comes from. So how does it come into my person is really where it's at, for me. So anyway, the foundation of that was really special to my life. It helped my life. It helped me look at it. And helped me integrate these other parts. So the Rogerian way allowed me to see the mandala.

MS: So that humanistic aspect is central to the center of the mandala itself...When we're a human being.

S/B: When you're a human being, OK? So anyway. So that's how I really, really, really looked at it. And it's how I still look at it.

MS: Some of these questions might feel kind of redundant...

S/B: Please, please, please, please, please, don't say that.

MS: Yeah, OK. Thanks. I'm just wondering how you respond to those times when inner guidance might seem less available.

S/B: Painfully.

MS: If the strength or the presence does vary over time.

S/B: Painfully, painfully, painfully, painfully. This is like a, I see it almost like a, what are those guys, you know, in Catholicism... They flagellate themselves with cords of barbed-wire, you know, nine cat tails of barbed wire. And that's how they did their prayers. And [laughs] that kind of seems like my life, sometimes. The flagellation to produce blood, to have the blood be the body of Christ. Yeah, it looks like that sometimes. But I try to avoid that as much as I can.

MS: So when you feel the guidance is less available, that tends to be...How are those two related, the flagellation and the absence or intermittent absence of guidance?

S/B: How are they related?

MS: Yeah, meaning, when you do feel that guidance is less available, how do you navigate that space, how do you...

S/B: Try and wait for it to come on. It's navigation, it's not the principle. I don't know how to make it come on again except to practice, practice, practice. So my practice goes like, I do my prayers everyday. I invite the Vajrayana mandalas in, whichever ones I'm working on or working with. Sometimes I just say OM MANI PADME HUNG. And a lot of people say, you just have to say that alone, you know. That's enough. You don't have to do these complicated forms to steer my mind into oneness or nothingness or emptiness. And then I have to work with the condition I'm in and let go, let go, let go, let go, let go. Or stay attached, attached, stay attached, stay attached. I can do this, I can do this. I can't do this, I can't do this, I can't do that. And then I get to have the lovely experience of after that's all done or with all that, is to work on other human beings who come up here for me to work on them. And the minute they walk in the door my mind goes to, my left hand brain goes to, "I don't know what the fuck is going on, I don't know how to get him out of this fucking thing. I mean he's come all this way, he's going to be paying me X amount of money, and I don't know what the fuck he wants." And I have to go through this terrifying disgusting format which I know very well: "You're absolutely inadequate and da da da da da da da da." And let go. I know the voices of these, I know the feelings of these things. And, you know, they're a practice for me. And they're dark, negative holes that I have to go through. And pop, this thing comes on.

MS: The guidance.

S/B: The guidance comes on.

MS: From a transpersonal...

S/B: From a transpersonal direction. So I decide to extend it. And so now I have a painting teacher. Start with a painting teacher, psychological painting. So I use my right hand and I let go of my left brain to the best possible...But it's always saying, "This is the worst thing, this is shit, you don't know anything about it." And I paint. And then I do pottery now. And now I'm learning music. And I'm beginning to sing. And my left brain is going, "This is terrible, this horrible, this is shit, you don't have a lesson." And I know that's how I can get on to the voice. That's my pathway.

MS: By recognizing.

S/B: This horror, this horror that I'm in. Which is my life. But it's OK with me, I mean. It's my life. And then it seems to help out a lot of other people's lives by going through this process. Now, I don't want to go through this process. I don't organize this process directly. I'm not holding on to this process. Under no set of circumstances do I want this process.

MS: Does that left brain process get less and less intense over time, the more you accept it? Or is it just easier to accept it as it arises, but is equally intense?

S/B: I think it's all easier to accept as it arises.

MS: But it's still equally critical.

S/B: Oh, equally critical. Always critical.

MS: So the criticality doesn't diminish with practice, just the not-identifying with it.

S/B: Not identifying with it is the one that allows it to flow. And that's the problem with most people's lives, is that they want to identify with it.

MS: Identify with something, at least.

S/B: Well, that's the only thing they have to hold onto. Now, I just had a recent experience of a guy coming in asking me to be his elder. I said, "OK, I'll be your elder." But I don't have any experience with that. I mean, there *are* no elders, you know. Who are the elders in our society? We don't have elders in our society. How crazy. So learning how to be an elder. First comes a peer that helps me, wants me to help in management of, in a particular direction. I can say, "This might be a place for you to go to look at." So, we've lost our entire elder culture.

MS: And there's something about this person's invitation, or trust in you, or faith in you in that role that made that role accessible to you?

S/B: Exactly, exactly, exactly.

MS: Is your experience of inner guidance, as you've articulated it, is it consistent with its role in what you've learned or read, either both in the shamanic and Vajrayana realms?

S/B: Well, I think you can read it. All you want to, all day long. But experiencing it is a whole different experience. And you have to interpret it your way. You really are, the cards have to be dealt from your deck.

MS: Does there seem at least to be a universal synchrony of how it works? Even though the cards are individual, is the deck the same? The way the traditions speak about this stuff, does it seem to..

S/B: Yeah, I think that's why I like it so much, because of the guys who have dissected it so well. I mean, these guys, over 600 years of dissecting it, you know, to these fine little points, you know, everyplace you look. You don't have a pathway to dissect, they've already got it.

MS: But in a different cultural embeddedment.

S/B: Exactly, so all you've got to do is take it out of that cultural embeddedment...

MS: It's hard.

S/B: It's hard to do.

MS: [laughs] It's hard to do.

S/B: And they do answer the question.

MS: And your way of unpacking it has been also to trust a lot of different teachers.

S/B: Exactly.

MS: And have a breadth perspective.

S/B: Well, that's what's come to me. Except recently I have elected to take a teacher.

MS: A root teacher.

S/B: A root teacher.

MS: In the Vajrayana?

S/B: In Vajrayana.

MS: And this root teacher, does this feel different than the plant teacher in the shamanic?

S/B: No, no, no. This is totally inaccessible to me. I mean, ta da ta da ta da. I mean, hard to find, hard to get at, hard to keep. I'd love to see him every day. But to see him every year. If I can get there. Same way. Same way.

MS: Hmm. I'm being currently, I don't know whether it's guided, or moved to look, to buy a piece of land across the street from my teacher's house. And it's a very powerful...[laughs]

S/B: It's a very powerful pull. But is it the truth? Of who you are. That's the biggie.

MS: And for me there's always the question of the oak tree and the acorn. Of being eclipsed by the larger royal flush in this other person's hand when we're still trying to get a straight.

S/B: Hold on a second. [To repairman driving out]: Goodbye, [name]. Thank you very much.

Repairman: Anytime, just give me a call.

S/B: I really appreciate it.

Repairman: I might give you a call. I'm having a little weird situation. L5, L7, pain down the shoulder for five weeks now.

S/B: The C5, C6, and C7. Yeah, I like the area.

Repairman: Yeah. I'm on Provoxin and Vicodin and another...Ibuprofin...

S/B: Well, I don't do that. I just do it with my hands, man.

Repairman: Well, this is the only way I can work. I work four hours and I get this...

S/B: Yeah, I know it really well.

Repairman: I'll give you a call.

S/B: I'm here.

Repairman: Cool, thanks.

MS: [laughs] You've got a little drive-thru operation.

S/B: I don't need no fucking business! I don't need no fucking business. You see it. I mean, you saw what happened. I mean, it's exactly where my injury is. I know exactly what he's talking about. So yeah, yeah. So I think mine has been the reverse. Never, never, never being pulled into a teacher or allowing myself to be pulled into a teacher. But I'm just talking from my natural being-ness.

MS: I hear you. It's just for me, and this comes into a whole set of questions here, I guess. That seem very relevant from what you're speaking about. For me the fear of dilettantism...

S/B: Exactly.

MS: Of basically irrigating, you know, a thousand acres with one glass of water rather than focusing on one little plant, you know. So the breadth at expense of depth. But also being wary of the depth as eclipsing the opportunity for breadth, you know. Especially in this Byzantine culture of ours where we have all of these different teachings coming in and it seems to be our job to try to, you know, distinguish the essence from the different colored bottles that they're all housed in. To look at the universal stuff within them. But also just...How do we know to trust ourselves in that process of discrimination if we don't sample quite a few of them? It's a huge piece, and related to that is what you said before: how do you prioritize different practices, say with in the Vajrayana? What deities do you work with, what sadhanas at certain times? Without a teacher transmitting that, you're trusting something in yourself...

S/B: You're so lucky.

MS: How?

S/B: To have such a teacher you've committed to while so young.

MS: Very lucky.

S/B: To have time to learn it.

MS: For me it feels like the miracle's shown up, and can I show up to it? And there's *still* the doubt...

S/B: That's a biggie.

MS: And the reason why this dissertation work and the *psychospiritual* element of these four different traditions is so urgent for me, is that clearly a part of me is resistant to a monocultural approach...

S/B: Well, I've got to tell you something. I'd love to be you. To have the chance to live next to my teacher. But that's never happened to me. That's never been my path. You know, so, if you're that lucky to have found a teacher, a true teacher, and you have the chance to live next to him, where you can see him on a daily basis, be taught by him on a daily basis or a weekly basis or a monthly basis or *whatever*, then that's a pathway that's being grooved out for you. And I don't think it's dilettantism or anything like that, I think it's an opportunity.

MS: The feeling of dilettantism for me is the reverse. Of, there's the fear of committing to a mystery in a certain embodied form that might not, and this is my own indecision kind of stuff, that might not encapsulate all the different hybrid curiosities that I have.

S/B: Exactly, it might not.

MS: And the hybrid curiosities, right, they seem to both be a true gift of invitation, saying, "Listen, part of your karmic invitation might be to bridge these different disciplines. To try to help our culture, in whatever minute way, discern through the cultural embodiments of these various practices and discover the essence underlying all of them, their universal aspects." And also recognizing that finding a true teacher is extremely rare. This Lama, for me, this guy's as close to a living Buddha as it gets, there's no doubt about it.

S/B: I think that's the way to do it, man.

MS: But it's one flavor and the practices are sometimes so ego-dystonic for me.

S/B: Well, that's exactly right. I wanted to experience as many flavors as I possibly could.

MS: And so this is where I'm really curious in you as a unique individual who has been very closely aligned with an inner source of guidance from a young age.

S/B: With several bangs along the way.

MS: Bangs along the way.

S/B: Big bangs.

MS: Big bangs. And yet those bangs seemed also to deepen your empathic, I mean...

S/B: Well you just saw this guy give me his fucking shoulder, you know. I could take his shoulder apart in 15 minutes.

MS: Right. And the third Rogerian thing is authenticity, right. So these three qualities of Rogers and all this other stuff seems to have been more rarified, more honed in you, *because* of these big bangs.

S/B: Of course. Because they allowed me to be unafraid.

MS: Ah-ha. So the trust is also fearlessness.

S/B: The trust is fearlessness.

MS: And so whatever encourages that fearlessness. Whether it's one teacher and that particular form of refuge, whether it's playing around with a variety of traditions... That's the barometer or the litmus test.

S/B: Well, I'll tell you about the last surgery. January 2 and January 3. There wasn't a person in my group, OK, my family, my relationships, who thought I should do that surgery. And every single one of those mother fuckers thought I was going to come out a paraplegic, which is what the guy said I had every possibility of becoming. But I finally worked it out through all of my traditions, through all of my ways, that this body belongs to me. And what I do with it is none of their fucking business. [laughs] I'm saying it my way, OK? That it was an individual path and it was my choice to throw it up on the rack at this particular time of my life to see if I could get something out of it. Because I was going down the tube. Well, I did. I got this hand back and I can walk a bit. I've got some other little problems that are killing me right now, but we're working on controlling them. I didn't expect it, but I'm walking again. Which is really weird. And it's weird for them. So I took myself away from everyone. All of my friends. All of my relatives. My wife included. I came back to this house and there was only one bed in my bedroom because she was going to sleep upstairs, OK, because I was going to be a dead man. I'm not telling you this in a malignant way, OK? I had to let go and fly.

MS: The fearlessness. And what gave you the conviction...

S/B: Letting go of everything. Letting go of everything. My training is letting go of everything. When you take the *medicina* you're letting go of everything. When you do the Vajrayana you're letting go of *everything* in construction, OK? When do any of the pathways you must let go. First of all there's fear. That's the natural place of the being. The being, when it goes into collision with *anything*, whether it's physical, spiritual, or psychological, is frightened to hell, OK? Because that's who we are. Oo oo oo, from the ape. And the next thing is fear. Fear. How can we establish that we are going to be safe in this thing if we walk through it physically, psychologically, or any other way. It's a natural thing. You cannot do any damn fucking thing about it. The second one is the one that really is the marker. And the second one is the one that is identifiable, because you can't identify fear. And that's called *shame*. That's my word for it, OK? Because it doesn't have another concept. It's the identifier. [Exaggerated tone of self-pity]: "Oh! I fell over a tractor. I'm really sorry that I did that. That's very painful for me. How stupid I was. How clumsy I am." OK? And I've just ruined my life forever. It's called shame. But am I going to identify with that for the rest of my life? You're out of your mind if I'm going to identify with that for the rest of my life. It's going to drive me into a prison camp. A prison camp of thought that I did something wrong. I didn't do anything wrong. It just happened. It was an accident. So fear's OK, [laughs] because that's a natural, a normal response of what the adrenal and everything else is supposed to do.

MS: But the shame is digested fear.

S/B: Yeah, exactly. That's the identifier, OK. That's where it becomes into the bio-duality.

MS: The personal.

S/B: It becomes personal, the cloak, the piece of the body. I'm going to walk around in a red Buddhist thing. Whatever. Whatever.

MS: Unless that works for a person to help let go of the egoic stuff.

S/B: Exactly. That might be their piece.

MS: And that piece is one of fearlessness.

S/B: There's no such thing as fearlessness.

MS: But I hear you saying that trust is the positive valence of fear. That in letting go we can increasingly trust the field of support. And we can at least fake fearlessness.

S/B: Exactly. You have studied everything you can to get to this particular point with this particular teacher to do this particular thing. And you know that, and now this piece of land comes up. Are you or are you not going to identify with that at this particular moment in your life? That's the story. Now, you've got your way at this particular moment to deal with the story. One of things that I wanted to tell you was, number one, many of us did not realize, from the ages we came out of, that there were such things as teachers. So the number of people that would be required in the, or follow a particular teaching or teacher, was minimalist. Thank God you have the teachings that allow you to understand there are certain beings called teachers, like a lama or whatever. And you can assign yourself to that teacher to get all of his teachings, for whatever time it is. And that should be approached with number one, fearfulness. But also fearlessness. I want to look at you [turns wheelchair around to face me directly, after having sat side by side at 45% angle]. And that fearlessness, what your teacher will give you about fearlessness, is embedded in a place called learning the process of selflessness. But you have to learn it in a selfish way. So you have to have the commitment to be totally, absolutely, unconditionally selfish to draw in all the knowledge that you possibly can from this teacher, pull it into yourself in the most selfish ways that you possibly can so it *becomes* you. And then after that, after you have bathed yourself in the complete view of selfishness, that particular exposure, you know, that particular ornament, in Tibetan formats of ornaments. I love Christmas

ornaments. You know, there's multi-rectangular ornaments shining, so they have multi-colored ornaments, you know. Mine go in tetrahedrons, OK, but you know, that particular side of you, after you've grasped all of that that you possibly can, grasped all that you possibly can in that format, in total absolutely unconditional selfishness, then you learn the process of selflessness. Which is the route of compassion. You ever think about what these guys are saying? They're saying you have to address things in love and compassion. They just don't fucking fit together! Love and compassion. How do you describe the difference between the two? Of those? So that's, in my book, how to... The way to go at from our American way, is get all the selfish things that you possibly can. Which is the construct, the organizational way to get there, the practice of the mandala, the teachings, the *darshan*. *Whatever*. That's what these people are bringing us. Something that they've learned over 600 years. A way of thinking about it and the potentiality of the arrival of the Buddha in this country on his own. They're giving us *their* ways of getting it. Well, *thanks* a lot. Thanks a lot. So how will it arise alone? I don't know. I don't know. I mean, history will tell us that. I mean, Buddha's [?] of 200 years will be here in America, will be here for 200 years. I don't think it's going to be in Tibetan form. I don't think it's going to be in Jack Kornfield form. I don't think it's going to be, you know, whatever those things are. I think it's going to have its own form. Whatever that is. So getting the land, living next to the teacher, gives you the exposure that you need. It's like going to university. Signing up at university. So every morning you can do the prayers. Every evening you can do the prayers. And base your life around that particular sequence somehow. What a gift, what a gift.

MS: Right. And a true teacher will always keep reorienting you to your own individual enlightened aspects.

S/B: Exactly. A true teacher is selflessness, OK? Not the embodiment of selfishness. He has acquired selfishness. Maybe not. They might not look at it that way, OK? But I like to look at it that way. So what I'm trying to look at is my own selfish self. Have I gotten all the selfishness that I need? And the answer is no. Which is to correspond to a question someone asked me the other night: "Do I want to live?" You know, with the continuing impairments that I have. And the answer is simplistically that yes. Or I wouldn't have done the deal that I did. And secondarily, the healer said, "I can hear a higher self saying that you want to go and die." And yes, there is a higher self that says I want to die, because I don't want to go and bother anybody in this particular format. Bother my wife or anybody else. Or da da da da da da. But absolutely I'd like to stay. It's an enjoyment in this particular form, of learning it. Learning it on my own, OK? You have the richness and the luck of *not* having

to learn it on your own. Attaboy. Move in. Be totally selfish. And be fearless. The fearlessness is not what we think it is.

MS: It's not arrogance.

S/B: Get rid of the shamelessness. That's the one that you can see. What the hell are you ashamed about? Taking a teacher and a spiritual path. Sorry, I'm talking to you as I would talk to others. There's nothing shameful about that. At least as I view it.

MS: Maybe the shameful aspect is the ego surrendering itself.

S/B: Exactly. There we go. That's is it. That *is* it. Now you can see it. I'm sure you've seen it before. Don't misunderstand me. And it chooses, it's an ego identity.

MS: We live in a culture now where it's very hard, especially in the modern west, right, to separate the fool's gold from the real gold. We have very poor spiritual barometers. And so this dissertation is of interest to me in helping future practitioners to discern the fool's gold from the gold. And to more skillfully know when to trust a particular form of inner guidance as authentic. Or when to be skeptical of a false teacher posing as the real source.

S/B: There you go. Well, there you go. How do you find those.

MS: Because it's hard enough for me...

S/B: It's got to be hard for others.

MS: Well, it's hard enough for me knowing that I'm in touch, that I've been, that I've taken refuge in a true Buddha. And *still* there's the temptation to make use of the modern American invitation to take the best of all these different traditions and spread my energy thin. Even though I know this source teacher to be the real deal. Even still it's hard to surrender uniquely to one form of path, one flavor.

S/B: That's the way everyone goes in. At least I think that's the way.

MS: In what way?

S/B: That's the way everybody surrenders. One thing. So the door can open. I mean, somebody says, "How about a little cup of ayahuasca, honey?" And you've been trained along the way. Like my student, recently, who told me the other day, because I sent him down to Peru with a shaman who could take him, seven days of taking the stuff. He said, "I had a death experience." Yay! I've just shown you the pathway. Or you've just been shown the pathway to dying. What a gift. The fastest way that I could show him of being

not afraid. To steer. So that's the gift you're getting for being close to your teacher. How to steer. And then how to translate this to others. You say this word, "Va-jra-yan-a." What the hell does that mean? What the hell does that mean to, you know...Even somebody who can say, "OM MANI PADME HUNG," you say "Vajrayana" to them, they might not be to explain it, OK? Or, or...

MS: Or the opposite. Difficulties arise when we have a word like *tantra*, where people think they understand it all too easily.

S/B: All too easily. They think it's all sexual practice. When the majority of it is not. That's because of the human mind. Because it's so sexual, perhaps. It's the easy road, they think.

MS: That's called having your cake and eating it too! [laughs]

S/B: Exactly, exactly.

MS: They say the quickest way to turn off a Lama is ask him, "How do I, how can I have enlightened sex?" Well, come back when...

S/B: Come back when your question's not there anymore. [laughs]

MS: Exactly.

S/B: So it's like that. So let's go through some more questions.

MS: I just wanted to revisit one. Since you haven't committed yourself to a teacher that's outlined, you know, not having dedicated yourself to a certain teacher who has mapped out a developmental progression for you...And given that you've decided to trust your own inner resources for navigation...

S/B: Well, this is the way it's turned out for me. I can't get in my car to see my teacher.

MS: This is the way it's turned out. I understand. So given these circumstances, how do you decided when to prioritize certain spiritual practices? Which deities, let's say, to summon upon for certain situations? Which sadhanas to work on, to prioritize practices upon the path?

S/B: With another person or with myself?

MS: Both.

S/B: Well, what's attractive to me. [laughs] What's attractive to me, OK? Like, every time I, this one little Buddhist lady said to me a long time ago, the Dalai Lama said it too. "How many empowerments

do you think you're going to get if you're a Tibetan up on the plains running a bunch of yaks all over the place? If you get one in your lifetime you're going to be all right." So I look at that and I think, "Oh my God, oh my God..."

MS: I'm OK! [laughs]

S/B: Oh my God. [laughs] I didn't think I was in the American system, OK? I thought I'd found my way out by getting all these different empowerments. I thought I'd, you know, I think I know the way. But OM MANI PADME HUNG seems to be satisfactory enough. OM AH HUNG VAJRA GURU PADME SIDDHI HUNG seems to be satisfactory enough. OM AH HUNG BENZAR GURU PADME SIDDHI HUNG seems to be satisfactory. So if I stay within that neat little focus I know I'm going to be OK. Number one. So I can always come back to that. 101, 108 thousand times: "OM MANI PADME HUNG." I can always come back to that, simplistically as I want. Or I can always go out as parabolically as I can, OK? Because I know the other practices.

MS: And when and why is the parabolic helpful?

S/B: Well, I don't know that, OK? I don't know that. It's helpful to *me*.

MS: Because you mentioned attraction before.

S/B: Yeah, it's helpful to *me*. This is helpful to *me*. I go and get an empowerment. These days, like my teacher will be here these days. I'll go down and have an empowerment, OK, and they'll build this big, you know, stupa-like mandala thing with cakes here and things there. And then they'll take it apart, you know. And then the other guys will go in for five days of practice. I can't do five days of practice with him. I just got the empowerment. That's all I can do and I can't even do the practice because he hasn't given it to me. So this is all that has been given to me. So this is what I do.

MS: So getting back to the attraction aspect. There's a level of attraction that pulls you towards prioritizing certain things. And you trust that attraction?

S/B: Yeah.

MS: And can you describe that level of attraction? How to discern that from ego attraction?

S/B: Well, no, no, no, no, there are signs along the way. Like, I hung out with this guy. The embodiment of Padmasambhava. I can't even say his name, OK? I hung out with him twice. Now the second time that I hung out with him, you know, doing an empowerment, we

went down the road, walking down the road, or taking a wheelchair down the road, or getting pushed down the road so that you can get this little morsel of water or whatever, whatever the shit that they're going to pour on your head. And my teacher looked at me and I didn't know he was my teacher at that time. And there was this look in our eyes, and I knew for the first time that he was my teacher. One look. And he knew it too. And somebody told him what was going on with me and he gave me a second blessing with this sword or Maitrea. And in the midst of the white fog of coming out of anesthesia, traveling in the space of narcotics and all kinds of other things, I saw him there. I saw him in the place that he was going to be with me. Going through whatever the bardos are of my life. Coming and going through anesthesia and coming through recovery rooms. Intensive care units, it's certainly traveling through bardos. And I know that. And he was there with me. Because I'm a practitioner of going through those kinds of bardos. I've been through them lots of times. I've had my neck chopped off going through those bardos. In very many ways. I now have two rails tungsten, some metal, going up my neck, OK, and six screws on each side trying to keep my spine from closing in on itself. Now what kind of crazy at 68 would do that? I don't know if it's going to work.

MS: And how's this related to the attraction piece?

S/B: Well, how it's related to the attraction piece is that when I went out there and tried to do my jump off the edge of the cliff, he was there for me. That's how it's related. I was attracted to him. And his attraction. He was attracted to me in some way. Whatever attraction means.

MS: OK, so linking this to when to work with a certain deity for yourself or in service of the healing of somebody else...

S/B: I don't know how to do that. I don't know how to do that, OK? I'm not gifted in having had this thing. But they work with me anyway.

MS: And in terms of knowing when it's timely to work with one or another? Because the Vajrayana does offer a panoply of...

S/B: Yeah, man. I don't know, man. I would have loved to have been trained in that respect.

MS: So then how do *you*...I mean, not ideally, but how does it happened that you choose one specific alignment over another in different contexts? Does it just kind of come to you in a visual or as a hunch...

S/B: Well, I have a hunch.

MS: As hunches.

S/B: Well, similar to a hunch. Let's say this plant, *mimosa hostilis*...I read that they had picked it up and not too many people knew how to work with it. And they had worked with it, but used the second like harmaline component to get out the DMT. And the people who had worked with it were African Brazilians, and they were doing these dances with it. Many of the dreams that they had from the dances were similar to the ones that they had had when they were on DMT. No one had done any work with this particular plant. So I wanted to build a leaderless group. So I found nine others, or eight others of my brothers, all of whom are pretty well-versed in using these particular... I said, "Let's form a leaderless group, just like you would do in the jungle, and see if this plant will talk to us. See what it says. Let it teach us."

MS: But without an orienting shaman.

S/B: No leader in the room. In fact, one of them who has been invited has gone out and said we're a crazy, uncontrolled group. So we call ourselves "The [name of group]." Because really in relation to what we're talking about, every single one of us is a [name of group]. It's what we're trying to cleanse. That's what we're trying to open. Everyone wants to go in there and sees the Buddha as this...But he took a lot of shit away from himself. I mean, everybody says, but he had to take a lot of bad shit away from himself to be the Buddha. So why not honor that by being the bad Buddha? [laughs] So as I say, this group has been going on for seven years, taking this particular substance. And it's become a men's group that I've never found before. Men caring for each other. And being with each other. And hanging out with each other. In a way that was disproportionate for any other way of...A real family for me. I couldn't find it any other way. So we have a sangha. The men's group is a sangha. Each one of these men has other practices. But this practice together is quite different. I mean, every morning and every evening I'm before my altar and I'm doing Padmasambhava ritual, OK, 108 thousand whatever I'm doing. But the combination of this particular plant with that has worked very, very successfully. Now whether you should be taking a plant or not or a drug or not is totally up to you as a being, OK? I don't think the Tibetan tradition honors those things very well because they've already got it. They've already got the pictures. I mean, I don't know how they brought in the pictures, without drugs, but they certainly did very well.

MS: But you see yourself as exploring a unique iconography from this cultural perspective.

S/B: Exactly.

MS: And that has to be unearthed.

S/B: It *is* unearthed now. Yeah, it is unearthed now.

MS: And now that it *has* been, the derivatives of this iconography are enough. Just like being born in Tibet and being exposed to these?

S/B: I don't know, I don't know. I don't know, I don't know, I don't know.

MS: So how do *you* discern, since these traditions are so radically disparate, at least through the Buddhist lens sometimes, right?

S/B: I'm not sure.

MS: I'm not sure, either.

S/B: It would depend on how far back you would look. Because all of these fluoridic manifestations of the Buddha in Tibetan form, they certainly had to come from something.

MS: It looks like it.

S/B: It looks like it.

MS: So when the Buddha says no intoxicants, how do you yourself discern what is an intoxicant or not? What is your personal criterion for making that decision?

S/B: I don't care. I don't care whether it intoxicates me or not. That's not why I'm there with it.

MS: You don't care as long as what?

S/B: If it shows me the pictures and talks to me and teaches me.

MS: And you trust those pictures are authentic, how?

S/B: By whatever's going on in my brain that says this is a right way of being. I can give you an example of a teaching that this plant would give me, OK? One time she gave me a teaching in which she said, "Say yes to no." You know how fucking hard that is? To identify all the no's in your life and identify whether they belong to you or not? Same thing with yes's. So that's some pretty sophisticated teaching when you really begin looking at it. How automatic the yes's are. How they don't, may not belong to you. Or how automatic the no's are. And if they belong to you. Pretty

sophisticated clean-up. So, I know that. Pretty authentic. I had not examined all the no's that I say so specifically, so rapidly. "No, you can't do this." So, I don't know how I came upon that. Maybe it came from sophisticated learnings in different ways. But it came on nevertheless. And when I'm near her and when I drink with her, and her voice comes on, I listen automatically.

MS: And you take everything that's given or shown to you as true? Is there a discernment process there?

S/B: Well, you've got to get by that. There's always a discernment process, OK? The filter.

MS: And how do you, like with ayahuasca as well, how do you know what to take as true, because I've heard...

S/B: That's the power of your own self.

MS: And to distinguish the lower case "s" from uppercase "S" in "Self." To know when it's your ego speaking or whether it's something beyond.

S/B: Well, what's wrong with your ego?

MS: Well, sometimes it has preferences which are...

S/B: Well, what's wrong with it? That's another story, OK? The ego is your outside identity, OK? Well, I want to clean that up. I'm constantly working on cleaning up my outside identity. There's nothing wrong with calling on my ego.

MS: No, but if the ego's in the throne seat, it's going to seek to preserve...

S/B: Itself.

S/B: In a seat that doesn't really belong to it.

S/B: In some schools.

MS: In some schools.? [laughs] But the ego's about self-preservation. You said a lot of it's letting go of...

S/B: Then let it go, along with the filters...It's a letting go process. All of it, along the way.

MS: Gotcha. So the same thing, the process of working with medicine, letting go, letting go, letting go. And the remnant of what seems to manifest in that space of letting go and trusting, that can be trusted.

S/B: Well, I'll give you an example of people that come up here for me. People have to make a decision to come up here to me. In order to make a decision to come up here to me they have to believe I can fix them. Because I'm not in the system anymore. They're going to have to pay me \$150 cash.

MS: And no white coat.

S/B: No white coat, no stethoscope. Sometimes wearing a hat like this [floppy canvas hat], sometimes smoking a joint. This is who I am. These are the things that work with me. Accept them or not. But if you're going to walk into this house to be healed, you better believe you're going to be healed. So that's a big piece of the identity crisis that we all face when we come. Second piece: permission. Permission is always yes/yes. If there's a yes/no, a no/no or no/yes, we don't play. So I have to teach what permission's all about. Which allows me, once we gain what permission's about, entry.

MS: Like with transmission, the same.

S/B: Right, it allows entry. That's the respect of the other individual, OK? I'm constantly playing that game as we go up the body. Yes/yes, yes/yes. Do want this really fixed? "Yes/yes." And may I touch this? "Yes/yes." Over your no's, you know, is that OK? "Yes/yes." Are my hands feeling OK, or are they too hard? "Yes/yes." So we're constantly playing that game, even though we're talking along the way. So I'm having that individual release whatever the armament of the structure is. Being a partner. Being a participant in its own healing. From the beginning to the end. How are you doing that? I don't know how you're doing that. I'm just doing it.

MS: And it's a mutual surrender.

S/B: Exactly. It's a mutual surrender.

MS: And saying yes to no, it is affirming the parts of yourself that are still contracted with fear and loving them.

S/B: Exactly, and loving them anyway. And loving them anyway.

MS: Are you in a place in your life right now in which you're trying to make any big decisions, in which you might be seeking to summon upon inner guidance or guidance in whatever form, to help you navigate any imminent decisions?

S/B: Most definitely. Every day. It's the discussion, it's the decision of whether I should live or die. Do you want to be like this? Frail, static, sitting in a chair, crippled. Having people having to help you.

MS: Because you're a bull.

S/B: Right. So every day I have to face that decision. Those decisions. Every day my mind is in that container. Every day my mind is the container that says I don't deserve this. That it's the disease or help or anything else.

MS: And how to make use of what we're calling guidance to...

S/B: I just let it go. It's crazy shit. I know it's crazy shit. And I'm still here. So I know I'm here and well, I'm OK. I'm here. I might as well make this a good day. What do I need to make this a good day? What sorts this out? And let go, let go, let go, [whispers] let go, let go, let go, pray, pray, pray, pray, pray for this part to work and that part to work. Pray, pray, pray that you don't need to inconvenience another human being. Pray that you know, that you're not changing that human being's way of being. Pray that I don't have to involve my wife any more than I do. [Aloud] This is *my* trip, man, and this is where my trip goes. And yeah, but, maybe there's some other people that want to come along for your trip that want to be here. So it's tormenting, it's tortuous. It's tortuous. And I say, "OK, well, maybe I should commit suicide and get the hell out of there." And my people say, "Well, you do that and you'll be in one of the hell realms. You better stick it out, ride it." [laughs]

MS: That's some explicit guidance. [laughs]

S/B: Stick around and ride it. So I'm sticking it out and riding it. Because it truly is one of the hell realms. Sometimes just getting my pants up is part of the hell realms because I have to ask someone else to help me... And I deeply wish that my teacher would be here. So I could find formats of practice around this or that. But this is the way. I know it. This is the way that's been outlined for me. I *know*. I know deeply inside it's the way. I mean, I'm going to have Tibetans do *phowa* on me, OK, when I go. People who know how to do that process. And I come from a Jewish background and my brother won't understand it at all. But this is the way of choice. And I'm not afraid that the absolute God of the Jewish faith will disappear on me anyway, because I'm sure if he were around, or if he does exist, He would be pleased that I'm looking at all these deities along the way. In his own personal selfish way.

MS: He'd be pro-*phowa* [laughs].

S/B: I think he would be pro-*phowa*.

MS: I was wondering if at any time during this interview you found yourself drawing upon your own sources of inner guidance in answering my questions?

S/B: Well, I decided at the beginning that that's what I'd do. Because I've been told, in very, very short ways, that people are going to come and want to hear the words that I've got to say. So I'm releasing for the first time in my life. This methodology that I've learned or had to learn in this way in talking to people like you. Because this is the way it was supposed to be.

MS: And in the way you actually did that in talking to me, of responding from a place of guidance...

S/B: Exactly.

MS: How was that? Was it because you set the intention before and everything that came you therefore trusted?

S/B: Absolutely.

MS: Because of the planting of the intention.

S/B: Exactly.

MS: So you carved out that groove and whatever came...

S/B: And whatever came was all right.

MS: So it was really a set.

S/B: Yeah. That I didn't have to worry about speaking about navigating, destroying, changing, artifacting, fabricating, doing all the salamander tricks.

MS: Because the intention was pure.

S/B: Exactly. Remember last night [on the phone] I told you I might not know the answers to the questions. Not know.

MS: So let me ask you this final question. And it seems like maybe this is...And not to come from a shameful place, but this might not be a relevant question given what you've just said. But, if you were to make use of your source of guidance now at the end of our talk in responding to my very succinct question of "what is inner guidance?," what might come forth?

S/B: [Long pause] When you look for it, it's not looking for it. You have to be knowingness of it. There ain't no looking for it. You have to be in that knowingness of it. That's one. Two, you have to accept it and do with it whatever it tells you to do. So you have to let go and accept it. No questions about it. No organization about it. Know that is the rightful path for you. And the person who's asking the questions. And three, what makes me fearless. In other words, no identification of fear about it, of all the words I say. What makes me fearless. I'm not frightened of you. I'm not frightened of the words that I say. Because I have a long history, about 68 years invested in this. I'm still here, which is amazing. And I'm grateful for it. So, it has to come from that center or else it isn't worthwhile. Right? I let you in the door. So that belongs to me. So, why fuck around with it than be in a pure state with it? I certainly don't want any advertisement, OK? You said I could be anonymous so I could find my manner out here, totally on my own. Because I know from my deep inner guidance that people want to appear. They're going to appear. I know that I am practicing correctly because of how I practice. I mean, what's wrong with saying, "OM MANI PADME HUNG" a million fucking times? Talk about 108,000 times, mine's a million times or more. It's there almost every minute of my life. And I had a chance to see the old boy. And I have a deep belief that he saved my life. So I couldn't have made it here if we had done it the "right" way. There wouldn't have been enough time to get an airway in me. A fucking helicopter would have to land here. And then they'd rush me off to the hospital with no fucking airway and break my neck further than it was. So the visions that he gave me, which were totally wrong, someone trained medically would say, "That's some crazy shit." And then the three months I spent not talking to anybody, they said, "You really are the toughest guy I have ever seen in denial." [laughs] Maybe. Maybe. [laughs]

MS: You're like, "That's what Padmasambhava said about you guys!" [laughs]

S/B: Exactly. So I've got, although there are things missing, man, I would like to have again, but, this is it. This is the way it works, for me. And I have to be satisfied with it. Otherwise, I'm pretty fucked up every day. And a fucked up state ain't fun to be in. Especially when you're sitting here all alone. So, I'm just thinking about a fucked up space that I was trying to engineer before you were here. But that's another teaching.

MS: Thank you.

S/B: For me. My kids, I have five children. They mostly live in [name of city and state]. And I haven't been able to see my grandchildren. So I wanted to be able to go there to see my grandchildren. And when that happened I got into a fucked up space with my belly. So my

oldest son just called me and they want to come out here along with my grandchildren, and there are seven of them. And I've got a friend who can give me two busses that they can live in. But they want to stay in some hotel in [nearby city]. Which does not feel good to me. I'd like them all with me here. So I was in an argument state about it when I left the office, OK, thinking about how my baby feelings were going to be hurt if they stayed in [nearby city]. I'd like my grandchildren to sleep on the farm. But that's only a picture and an essay of my own self. That's what we're just seeing so a lot will happen no matter how the fuck it's going to happen. At least I'm going to see them.

MS: And the seeds of the farm will be planted in them. It's fertile soul. And they're powerful seeds.

S/B: Exactly. I want the impression of them seeing me one time. Just one fucking impression.

MS: On your land.

S/B: I mean, none of them, none of my grandchildren, have a somatic life that goes along with mine. Because they're all adopted. All of my children are adopted except one. And all the kids I've adopted have babies. So there's no genetic connection. But I want this other one, which I think is much more important than a genetic one. So if they come out here and they see me on the farm in this particular state, that will be present with them. But do they have to stay in [nearby city]? Well, that's what it is. I get one or two or three of those smooches and hugs and then they take them out of my way. And I'll have a birthday party. Which is really unique, because I never think of birthday parties. So maybe it's time to turn around, you know, *you* have a birthday party. So that's what I was thinking when I was talking to you. I didn't mean to drift away, but something gave me these pictures and I didn't remember that until just this minute. Why? Because we're mostly at the end, I guess. Now is there something that I haven't answered for you?

MS: Nope.

S/B: I've answered the best I've could. Or at least I've tried to.

MS: More than generous. Let me sit with that question, though...In having recognized this root teacher, did this seem to fundamentally change the way in which you've related to your path?

S/B: No...No.

MS: What *did* shift?

S/B: I know I got a pal along the way as I go through the *bardos*. And might point me to a good birth. That's it.

MS: So you've got good company.

S/B: Good company along the way. A good pal that I would listen to. "Go that way!" That's all I need.

MS: A reliable pal.

S/B: Uh-huh. A reliable pal.

MS: Who even the bull will...

S/B: Follow.

MS: Make way for.

S/B: Even the bull will make way for. Absolutely... You know, when I treat a person or I'm going to treat a person, or whatever it is, I'm filled with dire anxiety. Even at this stage. That I'm not going to be effective, they're not going to like me. It's going to be totally ineffective, OK? And pukey. Horrible. And if we can't sing or play together it's going to be horrible for me. So that's what comes in first.

MS: And that seems to be a necessary prerequisite.

S/B: Oh, it's absolutely necessary. Absolutely necessary.

MS: Why?

S/B: Because it can't turn on, and you can't feel it, and I can't do it, and I won't work with it, and I don't know.

MS: You're saying if the muse doesn't show up?

S/B: Everything. It's all these words or words that are surrounding words about all the things you're saying. They're not it. All these words I'm saying at the present moment are words to push you away from me. Because I can't define it. Other than know that it's a horrible, disgusting place to be in. And then all of a sudden, pop, snap, it turns on. And then the experiential aspect of being a *maestro* is you know how to work when it turns on.

MS: But the anxiety and fear is what? Prepping for a stage of humility? Which leads to a greater receptivity?

S/B: Well, who the hell knows what you call it. It may be a relationship with the Christ figure. Who the hell knows what it is. Maybe it's a need to be masticated and chewed up by the dark dakinis, OK, eating you with their feet as they get all the harshness and horror out of you, OK, as they feed on you and step on you. Sometimes I used to look at it is as being Kali Ma. She's all blue, she has all these legs around her and arms around her and all these heads and knives. And she's standing on the body of a corpse and you have to say to her when she comes to you...OK, one person said to me one time, you must tell her, "Ma, I really love you, even though you could cut me up and eat me." Because she may grant you the boon of life at that moment. Yeah, I like that, I like that idea. Kali Ma's going to cut me, eat me up. Yes, how wonderful! Ugh, that's horror, I think. I couldn't do that. Have her chop off my head. But Kali Ma, I know you're there. And I love you deeply. So that's how I know she's there, that she's hanging with me. And I don't subscribe to one form, OK? Of all the visions, Kali Ma is the embodiment of all the evil deities to me, female deities. They all cross over into Kali Ma to me. Because I don't remember them all, there's so many.

MS: And it's almost as if the left hemisphere has to exhaust itself to allow the red carpet of the right to roll out. And then afterwards the left hemisphere needs to assimilate it so it's not left out.

S/B: To organize it, to assimilate it, say who you are again.

MS: So it can salvage that scrap of eternity.

S/B: Exactly. Is that enough? [laughs]

MS: As long as you don't go on saying any more profound things...[laughs]

Interview with Shamanic Practitioner [S]

MS: Thanks again for talking today. I'm initially curious about how you yourself came to locate or identify the source or process of inner guidance in your life. And when I say "inner guidance," I don't want to prompt too much about what this experience might be, but something which is beyond the kind of noisy channel of intuition, where there's perhaps a clarity or a sense of really being in touch with an inner wisdom that is somewhat reliable and authentic. And again, we can be very loose in terms of how we frame that, and that perhaps will come out in our conversation. So whatever comes to mind in terms of what "inner guidance" evokes for you, given that our orienting question is, "What's the lived experience for you of inner guidance, and how has it come to make sense within your understanding of your own psychospiritual tradition?," which you can talk about as well. First, I'm curious about how you initially came to locate or identify the source or process of inner guidance in your life. And perhaps, you know, were there instances in your childhood in which you located or identified this source or process that you can think of?

S: I was really helped by my maternal grandmother, who talked openly about being visited by her son, who had been killed in World War I. And he would provide her with information about things that had to be done. Who was going to get sick, what she might do to help. And in some instance she would tell my grandfather to build a coffin and that would be their contribution to the community, to provide a coffin for somebody. So that when the person died the coffin would be there. And the people in the village recognized my grandmother as some kind of healer. And it was like, I grew up with stories like that and when I was a little kid, I remember receiving comfort, even though I was alone. As early as three I have a memory of that. My mother had been taken to the hospital and it happened many times. And so, school was very challenging for me because I wasn't very present and I was a pretty crazy kid. And I can remember being shown pictures, feeling pictures, of other children who were suffering. And there was a strange comfort in that I wasn't the only kid who was suffering at that moment. And then, I wouldn't say that there were direct voices, but these ideas would come in my head and they would be comforting. And then sometimes they would just be, "turn here, don't go there." And I thought that I was pretty crazy.

MS: How old were you when you first started having these experiences?

S: Six, Seven. I started drinking when I was, well...I was trying to kill myself many times, I tried to suffocate myself, tried to strangle myself, I tried a number of times and had to be resuscitated. The pain of my parents was really frightening and I couldn't do anything about it, but I could feel it all. I believe most kids can. And I started drinking when I was eleven and then I had very direct experiences of beings who I recognized as protecting me. I didn't know who they were at that point or what the energy field was. I had many incredibly close calls, but...I was drunk once climbing on a cliff at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and how I got down from there I don't know. You know, I was conscious, but it was like I was really being guided in what to do and when I started to...I can't, I...I tried to kill myself when I was about 20 something or other. I tried to drown myself, and I, literally, it wasn't going to happen. One of the things that I had trouble with as a kid was I would know stuff but I didn't know how I knew it. And again, there wasn't a sense of hearing something. There was...There was...God, this is going to take hours. I've never talked about this before.

MS: I've got time if you've got time.

S: Yeah...I would know things about kids and about people I was working with. I really started to see it in the first class that I ever taught right between 21 and 22 or something. And the parents in the class, three quarters of them had been through the concentration camps and they had tattoos and they were pretty fucked up. And the school didn't know what to do with the kids, who were also fucked up. And we were just expected to fill their heads full of stuff and if they couldn't learn it, well then it was their fault, kind of stuff. And I don't know what it was, but I would start talking to the parents and then we would both be back in these traumatic situations and they would see their kid differently and they would see their kid for who their kid was and not who the parent thought the kid was. I mean, not all the time. And I had funny things, I mean, even physically, like energetically. Things would happen. You know, I'd be told, "Go here, go there, go there." And then "shooo," here would be a situation or here would be, you know, a kid who needed something, kind of stuff.

MS: And this wasn't experienced as a voice so much? Was it more of an image or just a sense of a direct knowing?

S: A direct knowing. But I knew that, I mean, eventually I started recognizing that it wasn't me, you know, it was almost like outside me, you know. And I had an experience with a Ouija board. Two couples got together and they were very good at it. And for some reason they called me and there was a whole winter of really, pretty amazing experiences. And I started hearing clear voices at

that point, because Ouija boards are spiritually very dangerous and a lot of gunky energy can get released in this dimension through them. And that wasn't probably one of the most powerful, actually hearing things. And I was still drinking pretty heavily and smoking grass, and it was hard to find then. And having so much physical energy that I didn't understand. And I still couldn't understand how I could know things. And I would find myself in a situation and it would be like, OK. And I hadn't learned to say, "What do I do now?" And "shoo!" And really, things that I thought, "What?!" And whenever I didn't pay attention to the answers to the questions, it was always dumb not listen.

- MS: Did this information you received seem to be in service of something consistent? Or was it seemingly arbitrary, this sort of knowledge that you would receive? I mean, you said right now, that you could ask and receive a response.
- S: Yeah, I could...If I was fixing the car or something. If I was fixing the car I'd say, "You know what. What do I need here?" And it would be like, "Get this and this and this and this." And I would be like, "I'm not going to need that!" Now, did I know a lot about fixing cars? Uh-uh. But it mainly came through in service. In service in working with kids, in working with people. And when there was a crisis. So I was really good in crises. I would be cool-headed, quite deliberate, not judging, or being afraid. Just, what has to be done kind of stuff. And my spiritual practice, there was no spiritual practice to speak of in my family. My father was an atheist. And my mother, it turned out my mother had a near death experience when I was born, and then again when I was about a year and a half old. And she was clinically dead and came back. Because I wouldn't have had a mother if she had stayed out here and kept going. And she told me that the day she died, [laughs] at 84 or so. She had a complete hysterectomy when I was like 2 or 3 and no hormone replacement or anything like that. I don't know how she did it. Seeing people who've had hysterectomies and seeing the hell that they go through, I can only conclude that she was operating on a whole different system. And she had this knowing as well. And never talked about it. I mean, she would talk about her mother being visited by her brother. And without judgment. I mean, it was just like, matter of fact. And then, I guess it was in the psychedelic work that I really started to realize that each of us lives in many different dimensions. We only think we live in this one, but we're actually operating in a lot of different places and there are a lot of beings from different dimensions that are operating in this one and it's like, where do we put our intention? So it was working with mushrooms and ayahuasca that I really got the strong sense of entities, guides. Intelligences would probably be an easier way to talk about them. I've kind of avoided humanizing them. Partially out of respect, and partially I guess

because I wasn't that interested. And it was just part of my life, you know, there were things I had to do here. And I feel pretty strongly actually that we can jump over, jump over, as I did. Being here, pursuing, trying to understand all this other stuff out there. And that's not why we're here. We're here in this level of existence. And can we open ourselves for help, can we ask for help, can we humble ourselves? You know, say we need help and say, "Thank you very much," and be appreciative of the help. So, I've had beings and entities and animals and [sighs] plants and trees, and one of the good things about having all of your boundaries violated is that what we call "reality" becomes sort of in question. As a kid, if you can't count on anything predictable then another set of things happens. And I was, I think, given a great gift when my mother and my grandmother talked about my uncle. Although I never got a sense of him coming. I mean, sometimes he's come, but it's been bigger than him. You know. [laughs] It's like, when I was a kid, realizing that I was just one more kid who was suffering. And that experience was a huge one. And it was, yes, you're suffering now, and what are you going to do in three hours? And maybe you'll be alive and maybe you won't be alive, but you'll still be OK. So I'd say the biggest thing I've gotten out of it is this sense of calming and...I, for a long time as a kid I thought that this was everybody's experience and I was kind of surprised to find out that it wasn't. And I don't think in my life I've ever had a conversation like this, but just little glimpses of pictures. And it just may be that people don't know how to language the experience yet, which is why I'm excited about your work. And that can we validate it for kids. So there are some, you know, right now I think what's happening, a lot of people are giving kids a lot of new age crap, and I think it confuses the issue, you know, trying to personalize, trying to give a personality to these things. And I think it limits it.

MS: So when you say humanize or personalize, you mean psychologize? Using a psychological interpretation?

S: Psychologize, yeah, umm-hmm. The book that really excited me was called The Mutant Message and she wrote a sequel, The Message from Down Under. And it was the woman who had gone to be with the aboriginals in Australia. And I met the woman, she was on a book tour. And she was saying how she had to disavow her books because the Australian government would have gone after these people. But she said, you know, "How did you feel when you read it?" And I said, "Well, I knew I was right." I knew that we have a lot more sense than we think we have and that we can communicate with all of these, you know, we can, those plants over there, you know, [points to bushes outside window], each one of them has an intelligence in it. It's not just that they're giving us oxygen and taking our carbon dioxide. I mean there's big, big energy coming out of them. And then it's like, how do we tune into

that? They're tuned into us, we don't feel it. With ayahuasca I really got to see it. I mean, the ayahuasca has just been a Godsend about how accurate these natives were in Australia and how we humans have been given the task of taking unity consciousness or God consciousness to another level. So I have sensed that what's happened to me is going to be happening to everybody. And that for a lot of people they'll think they're kind of crazy.

MS: You mentioned the experience of calm, you said it's one of the greatest experience you've received from "it." And this calm, you've mentioned in crisis before, especially with kids, is this in some way related to this sense of guidance, the calmness?

S: Mm-hmm.

MS: Can you say more about that? The experience of calm and how that related in terms of the clarity or the experience to stay grounded and perhaps in touch with a sense of what, I think you said, needs to be done at a certain moment? In a somewhat objective sense, almost?

S: What's going on with that kid and what the kid needs. And I'm aware that my fear and my lack of presence with my own suffering gets in the way of being able to...to give the same kind of energy that's given to me. Because the energy that's given to me is good energy. And it's usually kind of humorous and kind of simple. And lots of little words, nothing big and fancy. And I've noticed that when I can be really simple and slow and use little words [laughs] and be light, then that's usually much more effective than anything else.

MS: As well as being able to stay present with your suffering, you said?

S: Yeah, the presence with your suffering is a thing that fascinates me right now. My dad was not taught by his dad how to suffer. He was taught how to pretend that he wasn't suffering. And so the suffering persists. And when I was suffering, because my dad was blind to his own suffering, he couldn't see my suffering, and he couldn't help me with my suffering. And he didn't know how what he was doing was causing me to suffer, because he couldn't see my suffering, because he couldn't see his own suffering, and on and on back in time. And I watch how I've hurt my son, and it's been a good lesson, because by not feeling, by making a decision or being taught to not feel, that shuts down my antennae to this greater wisdom, this more connected wisdom, this having allies, you know. And that's really what it's about, we've got allies you know. We've got that tree and those plants and my ancestors and your ancestors egging us on and saying, "Come on!," you know, "Get with it!," you know. And when we don't honor them, it's like

there's a break in the reciprocity. And so we can't feed, we can't get nourishment, because we haven't got room to be nourished, you know. If my head is so full of thoughts about stuff that really, if I know how to suffer I could have let go of, when my head is so full of pain and suffering and fear and all this stuff that you know, what have I got to give? I only want. You know, there's no taking part in life. I don't know, Matt, if I'm making any sense. It's embarrassing. [laughs]

MS: It really does. And I'm curious about the suffering. When you mentioned allies and you mentioned reciprocity, this experience of guidance, of calm, clarity of presence, which includes being with one's suffering, to be available, let's say, to the suffering or needs of others, there seems to be a service piece intrinsic to this. But there also seems in the ally recognition...the recognition of our allies helps us tune in to our own guidance?

S: Mm-hmm. They can give us, if we recognize them, they can mirror stuff to us, we get...

MS: Can you describe more about that mirroring process? And how the allies and the inner guidance piece are connected?

S: Mm-hmm...Each one of us human beings, each sentient being in the world, is the center of the universe. And this won't make any sense if you just think geometry. But the energetic sense of the center of the universe. And we are defined by who we think we are and who other people think we are and also by this being part of all that is. It's the God part of us or something. And the allies are...they're who, they're part of who we are. They're not distinct from us, we're not distinct from them, we only think we're distinct. You and I, if we think about it, we can realize we're pretty connected to that bush over there. It's a little harder to think the bush is really connected to us. And it's even harder to think that I can ask that bush for help and I can hear it asking me for help. And what it wants is it wants recognition. Because the recognition helps it with its, that's enough energy for it.

MS: And what sort of guidance is given or received when we recognize?

S: The central one is, "You're OK." It's love. It's what we all want, and that's what's demanded of us. And love comes in lots of different ways, you know. Sometimes you have to be firm. You've got to do things that may hurt. If some kid is going to run across the road then you've got to run and grab them. And they may be angry because they want to go across the road. But you say, "No, there's a lot of cars on the road," you know, so...I don't know, Matt. Shit, this is hard work. This is tough.

- MS: There's a lot of stuff here.
- S: Oh God, yeah, I'm sweating when I think about it. And you know, and whenever I get images...like there was once this, I think I was, it's funny, I can see where in the circle I was sitting, that life is like a hologram in a way. And because we're the center of the universe, everything is reflecting back to us, far more than we know. And movies like "The Secret" and all this positive thinking kind of stuff is only scratching the surface. And so, you think of all the bad things that are happening in the world, and these are all black holes of fear and absence of love, all coming together, you know. Darfur would be another example. And then on a bigger thing, the people who are there are suffering and are learning the connections. The angels there, their spirits guides, are working overtime. Miracles, huge miracles, happening all the time.
- MS: So if I understand you, by connecting with our allies, we're able to ourselves be more present to the love and confidence, basically...
- S: Mm-hmm, connection with life...
- MS: ...that is needed from us by the universe at large. And the guidance therefore is synonymous with the clarity of recognizing that truth.
- S: Mm-hmm. See, I think that we're coming into a time in that what you have and what you know and how you look and all that kind of stuff doesn't matter. It's more like, what's your character is like. And you know, are you somebody who's helping out life, or are you somebody who's a problem, and an unconscious problem. And sometimes I think the spirits will help you, will help people who learn how to ask, do things that aren't really right, you know, that aren't good. But it's like, well, you've got to, that person and their soul or their being has to learn that. And so I've seen people getting a lot of guidance to do some pretty bad stuff.
- MS: This is a big curiosity of mine, actually, which I was about to ask you. Which is how does one, or how have *you*, learned to discriminate between authentic and false confidence in relation to true guidance, perhaps in the experience of ayahuasca, specifically, or in general? How do you know that you can trust in the source or process? And again, this discernment between the authentic or the false guidance?
- S: One of my teachers in the jungle - and everything was being translated - but he said that with all of the work, ayahuasca, any of the spirit helpers, any of the spirit allies, it was essential not to take any of what they said at face value. Maybe 20% of all the messages you should take literally. And I discovered that when I was a kid. It was like, yeah, this can be really right, but boy, be careful how you

use that information, because you can't just blurt it out. Number one, people will think you're nuts. And number two, you know, that's not real communication, you know. It's like, why am I bothering to say that?

MS: So the information is given in a way that still requires further interpretation.

S: Oh you, interpretation, you have to flip stuff up and down, does it feel right? How is it in my gut? And when you've suffered a lot, especially as a kid, you don't trust your own guts. So it's been a heck of a job, because a lot of times I'll do things that will hurt people or my sense of time is off, you know. And when people use the I Ching or use the tarot or get advice, they aren't, they're thinking on lateral or lineal time lines and it doesn't work that way. It's like, no, that may come, but what's the next step? What's the simplest thing that can be done here? What's the kindest thing that can be done? What's the thing that can do no harm here?

MS: OK, so there's the criteria of kindness, of simplicity. And you also mentioned a feeling in your gut that also gives you the ultimate level of discernment, after you've flipped things around. Can you describe more of that feeling in the gut process by which you come to recognition that this is reliable? That this is the true or necessary or timely interpretation of the information? And what that experience is like for you?

S: When you eat, when you open up the refrigerator and open up a jar and you get a whiff of this rotten smell, your stomach goes "whoa!" and your whole body says no. And it's that same kind of sense, OK. But we've, I think because we don't know how to suffer, we don't know how to feel deeply and deeply feel passionate. We've forgotten what it feels like in our bodies, we've forgotten the enjoyment of, oh, this feels really good. Like yeah, this is like, mm-hmm, this is what love is and most people have forgotten. People don't know what love feels like and that's why people make big mistakes. And it's like, anyway...And the spirits are all wanting us to heal. That's what we have to heal, that's what soul loss is, when you lose your sense of feeling what's right and what's love and what isn't, and you lose your senses, you know. We're lost our senses.

MS: So there's a large somatic component to this.

S: Huge! Like, huge, huge, huge, huge. I remember I was in the playground when I was in grade one and I just remember this energy coming through. Oh my God it felt great. I mean I still remember, it was just like, "Whoa!" And I was loved. I was loved by spirits in that yard because I was so alone and so frightened.

And I couldn't have talked to anybody about it, but I distinctly remember it. And when I work with the ayahuasca, or less with Ibogaine, with mushrooms, I know what it feels like. The spirits love us and that sense of milk and honey and realization and optimism and good energy. And the parts of the brain...MDMA, for a lot of people, it's the first conscious time they ever felt what it feels like. So they have this sense of, "It's OK." But the set and setting has to be pretty calm and quiet. You won't get it if you're in big driving music or even little driving music. It's like, you'll get it if you're in silence or you'll get it if there's a gentle breeze or a babbling brook, or you know, waves in the ocean or something. Or a song, bird song. All the nature sounds and sensations are there to give us energy, I mean, and we can plug into it. And if it's a big storm or something, then feel it in your gut and just feel how much energy [laughs] there is and how invigorating it is. Yeah.

MS: So this recognition of being supported in love really has a lot to do with set and setting, yeah? To tap into the authentic experience?

S: Uh-huh, yeah. I had a very powerful...I want to tell you about Sai Baba as well. Sai Baba for me has been the clearest experience of...I was in a workshop, holotropic breath workshop, with a woman who I just met there. And we chatted and talked about partners in the experience. You've done holotropic breath work, yeah?

MS: Mm-hmm.

S: And so she said there's two things you should know about me. One is I'm a devotee of Sai Baba. And the other is my husband committed suicide two weeks ago. And I was knocked out by the order of those events, OK? [laughs] The sequence, you know. And she eventually showed me a picture of Sai Baba and eventually gave me some vibudhi and told me how to use it. And I went back to San Francisco and couldn't sleep, and all this energy was whirring through me, and I put some on my tongue and on my forehead and Sai Baba popped into my head. And it was literally like he was right, well, he *was* right there. And he kidded me, Matt, he kidded me for 45 minutes around my sense of poverty and how it had been ancestral. And then three or four months later I was sitting at his feet in India and he has been a consistent source of...great energy for me...And a source of wisdom. And I guess I also want to say something to the effect of being taught not to trust. By experience by people saying, "Don't trust that, second-guess it," that kind of stuff. And you know, because I didn't talk to anybody about this kind of stuff, nobody labeled it. And I was able to kind of just let it bubble inside me. Nobody asked about it. I talked to a couple of people about being kind of frightened about knowing stuff and I didn't know how I knew it and it was beyond intuition. I mean, it would be like, down to the nitty-gritty of what's going on.

And I'm trying to think of an example, but anyway, I'm jumping all over the place. [laughs]

MS: No, it's interesting, in a very uncanny way you're anticipating all of my questions here. I'm interested in if there's been a developmental aspect to your experience of inner guidance in regards to trust, kinds of information, its way of appearing. And you were just commenting on that right now. I'm also curious, you said that as a kid you had this kind of, "turn left, turn right," but in the first grade you also had a sense of being in this field of support, or spirit, right? And later, this, more of even a sense of this somatic, gut confirmation. And I'm wondering if there was a developmental aspect to these different modalities or different portals or channels of cueing in to this sense of clarity? Which was kind of, as you said, beyond intuition, this direct knowledge. Or if it's been somehow, has there been a consistent developmental aspect to it, in terms of how it's developed? Or has it been somewhat ad hoc?

S: It's been ad hoc. Why has it been ad hoc? It's been ad hoc because there's been something in me that's been really resistant to imposed form. And I am unsure... To answer your question, it's been very developmental. And developmental for me is not linear. It's more spiral. And so, and the spiral may not even be on the same plane. There's kind of this corkscrewing-like amusement park ride that is operating almost in a series of pixels around a sphere. And so one minute I'm having a peak experience and then the spiral will spin into something that is really energy draining and very frightening and all that kind of stuff. And I think that what's happened to me, part of it has been passivity which I have brought because of what happened. I didn't think I had influence over outcomes. When kids are traumatized, their will is really affected, so they can be good at observing stuff happening to them, they can be good at just being a victim. But doing something to protect themselves or something for their own good or something like that, that's difficult, they don't know how to do that. And I can remember one of my mentors, when I explained, I was being asked to recount an initiation experience. And you know, I was describing how this gigantic lizard kind of had me pinned down and I was able to describe the lizard in pretty fair detail. And my mentor said, "What did it say to you, what did you say to it?" And I remember being absolutely shocked that I could say something, that I could ask a question or make a statement, you know. I was just kind of overwhelmed.

MS: And therefore influence the outcome of the experience.

S: Yeah. And so things like that, they just keep adding up until... the sense of my body is becoming fuller and fuller and fuller. So I've discovered like even five years ago I couldn't feel my ass like I can feel my ass now. Or I couldn't feel like right behind my belly

button. Or I couldn't feel, you know, the back of my spine. But now I can. And I'm aware of the energy that's there and I'm aware of where it goes. And I don't know if I was enrolled in a monastery when I was a little kid if I wouldn't be a lot, you know...I wouldn't know how to do all that stuff now. But I see my incarnation in this society, and I've been shown that this is the toughest incarnation going. Which is to get incarnated here, because all of the underpinnings of consciousness have been pulled away.

MS: Here, being...

S: Here being the western world, the United States. They've been trivialized, they've been abominated, they've been really screwed around, so we have to find our own way. We have to find our own center, you know. There's no universal cultural symbols. And I see it as an evolutionary jump, that it's not just a slavish...the symbol means this, or you know, if I do this I'm going to go to heaven. Sorry, I don't think that's how it works...And it's about the interconnections. It's like, can I open to the goodness of the world and can I not feed the fear of the world in every move.

MS: And so in your own life, regardless of this kind of nonlinear spiral conception of development, you have noticed an increased sense of confidence or efficacy in your ability to influence events. And also a greater somatic awareness of your own experience of events.

S: And when the other stuff comes it's that I don't feed it. And it will always come, I hope it always comes. Because that keeps me humble. And I know that, you know, sometimes it's like, "Oh yeah, I could stay up all night dealing with that. Just go to sleep, and go to sleep." And just say, "Sai Baba," you know, "and the angels and my ancestors and spirits of this house and this land, please come and help me." And my mind doesn't have to know how to do it. They come.

MS: And there's almost a greater clarity and confidence in your place in the order of things. And the symbology and the, and even being in this somewhat, ...chaotic incarnation or amorphous...you've had a greater experience of recognizing what energies to feed or to give attention to. And that's come through a greater somatic awareness, a greater confidence in the ability to influence situations. And that's come somewhat in a developmental or evolutionary sense of being in touch with this guidance.

S: Yeah, it's like when somebody tells you something or when you learn something, does it feel OK? How does it feel? And most people...I tried to teach some people once and somebody tried to teach me about how do you know when it's true, and you can't know that unless you can feel your guts. It's the bottom line.

MS: So you mentioned before that when you smell rotting food there's a revulsion that happens in a negative guidance sense. How about in the positive sense, when there's an affirmation?

S: Well, when you smell onions cooking or sugar caramelizing or you smell some chocolate. And everybody's got different things, you know, like the smell of perfume, you know. There's just so many absolutely pleasurable things in the world and there's different pleasures for different people.

MS: So pleasure has a...there's an aspect of pleasure that cues us into the awareness of what's true?

S: Sure. I mean, have you ever looked at somebody and just felt pleasure? Maybe it's a blue-eyed blonde or some kids playing. Or you see a beautiful arrangement of flowers. Or, you know, a beautiful painting, or a lovely presentation of a meal that appeals to all your senses, you know. And I think we don't know how to feel pleasure too. [laughs] Because I think people are similarly walled off from feeling pleasures, especially simple pleasures.

MS: Has ayahuasca helped you with that?

S: Oh God, yeah.

MS: Can you say more about that, of how it's...

S: Yeah. I used to feel badly, you know Matt, about how some women, and some men, would really catch my eye, and you know, "Wow!" And I would feel like a lecherous old bugger, you know. And I said to the ayahuasca spirit, I said, "What's this? You know, show me what it's about." And it was like, "That's an energetic gift. And say thank you." And so whenever I see somebody who really catches my eye, I just say, you know, "Thank you, God." Like, thank you for their Buddha nature, their good nature, that something really...Because I've noticed that if the energy's yicky it's not appealing. If anything it's like, "Nah, don't give it any energy." So, the development of something is...yeah, there's a skill, I'm realizing it, thank you. And the skill is you know, what do I feed with my energy, with my attention? And if I'm revolted by something I feed it. If I love it I feed it. So if I say, Well, I don't want to give that any energy, I don't even want to be revolted by it," you know, it's like, "Nope, I'm not giving it any." I know it's there, [laughs] but I know it's not good energy and it's not going to help if I'm revolted because that will feed that energy. So the nicest thing I can do is starve that energy a little bit and feed the good stuff. So it's accentuate the positive. And that's a skill that really builds and builds. And it's harder when I'm frightened, lonely, hungry, tired.

That gets, it's easier to get frightened and feel mixed up, that kind of stuff. So it's like, how do we get energy? And that's why I love to take people down to the jungle. And it's like, let people experience how much we're fed and how much we're loved. And oh God, that whole, all the spirits, there are spirits who love us and there are spirits who don't love us, OK. And the ones who don't love us, that's a whole other subject, OK, but it's not impossible. But you always have to distinguish. Now I'm talking to spirits who love me. [laughs] You know, because there are some spirits that are so hungry because there isn't any acknowledgment and there wasn't any acknowledgment from them and a lot of them don't even know they're dead. And they're just caught up in darkness. And there's a lot of that stuff in Ouija boards. There's a lot of dabbling with spiritual stuff.

MS: I'm interested again in the 20% idea. So it seems that ayahuasca is not so much giving you information as to *what* to feed. What is abhorrent or feels repulsive and what feels pleasurable. It more helps tune you into the truth that the experience *itself* of dwelling on something is what feeds it, but not the content of what should be fed or what shouldn't be fed.

S: It wants us to wake up, it wants us to become more reflexive. And when people purge...one of the big things in purging is that it wakes up our reflexes, it makes us more like animals, it reminds us that oh yeah, we're just like the animals. And the part that says listen, you know...If somebody says, "Yeah I'll tell you all the answers," you better run the other way, [laughs] you know.

MS: So the reflexivity is the human gift which ayahuasca will help tune you into. But as far as to what to be reflexive about, that's up to you.

S: That's your God part. That's your center of the universe.

MS: That's the guidance, the clear channel.

S: It's like, yeah, there's the guidance out there. And you know, does that feel right? Yeah, that feels right. And I've been really lucky because my grandmother, especially, she was able to love me pretty clearly. And I've got pictures of her and she's holding me and I'm just recognizing it, that she was transmitting stuff. And I feel really blessed to have that. And my grandfather, I never knew him, but I'm recognizing in this conversation that he was a big force. And when I drank, the downside of drinking is that it makes you pretty stupid and leaves you wide open to some pretty yucky energy. But I've had, one of the big gifts about my guides is that they have...I've always kind of had this sense of, "Nah, you don't want to go there. Don't go down that street. The energy there's too

screwed up, don't go there." Wherever. I had a chance, when I was in high school there a girl who decided to see how many guys she could fuck. And there were guys lined up around the block. And there was part of me that just said, "Nope, nope." And I didn't know it was, but it wasn't something that I wanted to participate in. And the next day when she came to school and everybody was laughing at her and stuff I just went and talked to her and said, "Hey, how you doing, you know?" It's that kind of stuff. So it was like, just around energy, you know. And I guess that's been the biggest gift around all these voices. It's like, no... One of the crazy, bad things is that I tended to see the best in things. [laughs] So sometimes I wasn't very good about hiring teachers and stuff because I would see their good energy but I couldn't see their shadow stuff, you know. I didn't want to feed it. But then I'd look and I'd say, "No, they were part of the healing." Because like everything that happens to us, you know, everything that happens to us is a reflection. It's really kind of an amazing system. It's all meant for us to learn and grow and to die better and to take part in life. And the invitations are there all the time, every second, every second, you know...

MS: Well let me ask you this, because you're touching on this now, too. And you've commented a bit upon this, but how has your reliance upon inner guidance worked for you in conjunction with outer forms of guidance from readings or teachers? And is there sometimes a tension or balancing act between the two, between your inner guidance and external forms of guidance? And if so, can you give present examples of this struggle or harmony at play in your life, and this tension of the outer and the inner? For example, you mentioned Sai Baba before. And it sounds like you're talking about this holographic reflexivity, so maybe they're the same after all. But as to how you currently negotiate that balancing act?

S: Yeah...I had a car accident once, when I was 25. And I should've been killed. The hood of the car was sitting on the driver's seat. And blood all over the place. And I woke up and my face was all cut up. And I just had this flap of skin on my face. And I was saved, because I shouldn't have lived through that, but I did. I didn't, I lost my ability to read after that. I could read one page, maybe two. And I largely became an auditory reader at that point. And it was really funny, because I got to be a school principal and I would have to read all of these big fat reports and stuff. And I would just give them to other people and they would read them and tell me about them. So a lot of the information I have hasn't come from reading. It's come from hearing stuff at the right time. And I haven't set out to figure all this stuff out. That has not been, that's not how I've lived my life, kind of. I haven't, I've tried not to think it. I've tried to just be it, just do it. And that message came through using psychedelics. That as a male born, when I was born, I had a

propensity to do and fix and everything and I was barking up the wrong tree. If I was thinking that then I was looking at a world that was imperfect and I was looking through fear. And my work was more like how to live life loving. And it's been really hard because any spiritual practice that I have or anything that I know, I can forget it if I get frightened. We get really clever and cunning when we get frightened and we get really stupid. [laughs] You know different things. And so how to...I've had great teachers, Matt, absolutely stunning teachers. Some of them just ordinary folks. And I believe there are bodhisattvas who are running dry cleaning stores and there are bums in the park and boy are there wise people, you know. And sometimes really crazy, crazy people are so close to the angels that if you talk to them they've got great wisdom for you.

MS: And as far as negotiating the harmony or the tension between the external and internal forms of guidance, how do you manage or negotiate that dialogue or that equilibrium, you know, or the reconciliation?

S: Sometimes not very well.

MS: Especially if they're at odds with each other.

S: I'm learning to just wait. And if there's an ambivalence just don't flip a coin. For a long time I just said, "Flip a coin." [laughs] In a way it doesn't matter. And now I just wait it out and so my sense of timing is really...and that the spirits have just said, "Don't be in such a hurry, you know." It's your fear, it's people's fear that makes everything go fast. And when we go fast then we haven't got time to be aware of what we're feeling. And then we get stupid. And people just get so caught up that they can't, you know...And when I get frightened I can't hear anything, I can't feel anything. I'm just so frightened that I'm going to lose something or I'm going to die or somebody's going to get hurt, or you know...It's that, just relax and trust.

MS: Have you ever been in a situation where you felt your allegiance to an external teacher or teaching that you felt should be worthy of your trust has been in conflict with an inner source of knowing that you also felt you should be able to trust? To have to negotiate that tension?

S: Maybe. Can you give me a for instance of what you're thinking?

MS: Yeah. For instance, maybe there's a teacher or teaching or tradition that we assume to originate from a perspective of truth. That we, in our experience, or from the experience of others, feel is worthy of our devotion, trust, faith. And perhaps that can be at odds with an

internal form of knowing that we've also developmentally and experientially come to recognize as reliable. And if they're at odds, how do we know what to side with? Or how to reconcile the two? And has that at all been at play for you ever, or is that at play now currently? And you said, waiting as a strategy in general until the two perhaps reconcile...

S: Yeah, you get perspective, you know. Compassion's been one of the big ones. And I really, there was a book that was very popular a long time ago, it was called, If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him. I guess very early, early in my life, I mean before I was ten, even less than that, wow... My dad and mum were both very, they suffered a lot in lots of different ways. And somewhere in there I got compassion for my father and for my mother really early. And realized really early that, you know, they're going to be right sometimes, they're going to be wrong sometimes. I was really a lousy student. I flunked every test until I was eleven years old. I couldn't stand the pressure of anything, had trouble learning anything. And somewhere in there, there was this real distrust of authority. And if anybody said this was the way, I had this little voice, "Well this is the way for you!" [laughs] I don't know how old I was when I had this moment, but good for you. Maybe it's going to be true for me, maybe it isn't, I don't know. Does it feel right? And what's our path? And everybody's on a different path. I mean, everybody. Thank God we've got so maybe different kinds of religions or we'd be robots. And we've got so many different things to follow, you know. It's like, and so... in this instance I have a suspicion that being attached, being aware of these sentient beings and ghosts, whatever you want to call them, really freed me up in lots of ways. My mum and dad, because they were sick and family life was so chaotic, there wasn't a 'mummy or daddy are always right.' My dad used to beat me with a big strap. And I was like 5 or 6 years old, and I remember getting up in the night and going down and cutting the damn thing up. And so when my father went to beat me [laughs] he opened up the kitchen cupboard and here were these bits of strap. So there was something in me, even at that age. It was like, getting an idea like that and just doing it. And realizing, well there are going to be consequences, but it was the right thing to do. So, I had that a lot, you know. And I trusted more and more and more, you know. For a long time I was embarrassed about it.

MS: Embarrassed about...

S: Just having this weird way of living my life, you know. It's not linear, you know, it's not lateral. I can't even describe it myself. [laughs] But I feel very much alive and I'm learning to ask for what I want. And so I tell the plants and I tell, hey, the prayers of gratitude, and all the spiritual teachers. You know, I don't ask them

for things. I say, you know, "Please, I'm sending you good energy, keep doing all of your good work."

MS: So if it came to discerning between an external *authority* and an internal *authority*, the choice would be the latter. But it's not such an easy discernment because you said that ultimately you would side with compassion and compassion would be the ultimate orientation?

S: Compassion for myself, compassion for my guides.

MS: And ultimately the inner and the outer should be in alignment, because it all should be serving the same truth of that compassion?

S: Well there is, I mean, there is alignment you know. If you take a look at the universe, a map of the universe, it gets to be kind of interesting. You know, what I think is a big problem, all this kind of stuff is just peanuts. And that's what I got when I was a little kid: it's peanuts. So the principal's going to strap you. Peanuts. And there was part of me that was really frightened. And part of me was just, go in and go to school and know that I was going to get beaten up or know that I was going to fail and the teacher would give me a tough time. Or know that my dad was dying or something like that. And it was like, yup, and it's true. I mean, you're still OK.

MS: And I'm curious as to how this might have ever played a part with ayahuasca herself. Have you ever received guidance, or let's say a sense of directive from ayahuasca, which you have not, which you disagreed with?

S: Oh, God yeah.

MS: And how have you navigated that discernment and ultimately came to a decision about where to place your trust?

S: Jesus, what story to tell you? I mean, sometimes there's a great story. Every year in Peru I say to the ayahuasca, "Well, how can I help you this year, what do I have to do?" And the ayahuasca came back one year and said, "You've got to get a wood stove." And I said, "Why do we got to get a wood stove?" And it showed me how the electricity was going to go out and that the stove that was there was dependent upon electricity and it was noisy and we had to have groups at [name of house]. And so I said, "Well, they're pretty expensive. So, you know, where are we going to get the money to pay for a new stove?" And it came back and said, "When you get back, go and see so and so." And this is like, am I making this up? I don't know. But it's like there's a dialogue going. So I get off the plane, get unpacked, and the next day I go and see this guy

and say, "Where can I get a stove, wood stove?" And he looks at me and says, "Oh, I've got one in my front yard, you can have it." I looked at that one. "Man," I said, "How the hell, you know, he would know?" And the times I've said no? The ayahuasca, on an ayahuasca journey in Boston, I was shown... Oh, I can't tell you that one. The ayahuasca said that I was to go to somebody who was doing something kind of stupid. And kind of just have a gentle talk with him and say, "Listen, there's a lot more going on here than you know. And, you know, how can I help you kind of not rock the boat for a lot of people who are working with this medicine?" And I didn't. I said to somebody that I was going to go and they said, "No, no, no, you shouldn't do that." And so I didn't go. And the consequences of me not going were big. They were, trouble happened because of it. And that was a good lesson.

MS: Did you not go because of fear, or because what this other person said resonated more in yourself more than you trusted the voice?

S: I didn't listen.

MS: Has there ever been a case where you've listened to an internal source of authority more strongly, that you've trusted more, and that's what's dictated your lack of receptivity to ayahuasca's message? Or has it just always been...do you know what I'm saying here?

S: I think so.

MS: Because I hear you saying in this past example that you *didn't* listen and there were negative consequences. But you *should* have listened. Has there ever been a case where you've decided *not* to listen because there's been a competing voice or competing source of internal guidance, where you've thought that has *trumped* the directive of ayahuasca, and how have you decided to...

S: Yeah, but you see, ayahuasca and spirit guides should never ever, ever, *ever*, in my opinion, be listened to literally. They don't want that. They don't us to be their slaves. And if they do then they're sucking energy from us. And the neat thing about the ayahuasca spirits is they'll tell us something and it's just like, well, are you going to do it? Are you going to think about it? Are you going to flip it upside down? Are you going to work with it? Are you going to feel whether or not that fits? But at least they're aiming you in that direction. And if you're not, you know, if you have to, then you will slavishly go along with the message until you go [slaps forehead] "Ah!, I've got to think for myself! Because I'm the center of the universe." And so, you know, it can say, "Here!" And I'll look at it and say, "Yeah, OK, but what feels better? Does the opposite feel better? Let's flip it upside down. No." And then I'll

say to it, "Well, why are you showing me that?" And then it'll go [clicks tongue], "we're showing you this because...feel *that!*"

MS: So there's a thinking involved...

S: Thinking, feeling.

MS: A flipping involved and there's also a dialogue to keep on...

S: Yeah, I'm putting it into a dialogue, but it's more like a... This is what I try to teach people, you know. And I'm saying, don't take everything literally, you've got to flip it around, you've got to work with it. And I guess what I'm realizing is I've got to say to people, "Feel it. Does it feel right in your gut? And does it think right? Because your thinker is important. Because it's like a big Baleen whale that's sifting information all the time. And does this one fit somewhere? And how do you feel about it? Does it, is it on course? It's like our compass.

MS: And the thinking and feeling should ultimately align.

S: Yeah! Well, yeah. [laughs] Every time I've ever done anything where there isn't alignment I get into trouble and bad things happen. And bad things happen when I'm shut down and I'm not feeling my feelings fully and I've lost track of feeling my gut. And I'm going too quick and I'm all mental, and that's when the chaos happens. And that's usually because my energy is up in my head or down in my dick, one or the other. It's certainly not in my heart.

MS: So the heart is the middle...

S: The heart's the middle ground. It's like there's got to be a harmony inside. And you know, I can't feel the harmony if I'm really frightened. And that's what the spirits want us to, they want us to be harmonious. They want us to, you know, take part in living. And we can't, when we get sick. When we get sick it's like our bodies have forgotten how it feels to be healthy. I don't know, Matt, I must sound like I need psychotic drugs or something. [laughs]

MS: Not to me.

S: You're so kind.

MS: Do you feel that your current relationship with inner guidance still developing or evolving?

S: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

MS: Can you speak to that?

- S: Almost every night. Every night. [deep sigh] My inner world, 90% of the time, is akin to my first times consciously going unconscious...Like do you remember the first time you ate mushrooms or the first time that you took acid or the first time you smoked grass?
- MS: Yeah, it was horrific.
- S: That's where I live, all the time.
- MS: That's where you live 90% of the time?
- S: Yeah, pretty well, pretty well. And it's just a question of focus. And, so, it's always evolving. It's just like I'm growing. I think we're all growing. I think that I've been really lucky. I've had the right teachers and the right experiences and this is the way *I'm* growing. And thank God you're growing in another direction, you know, because we're all...
- MS: Living in that space 90% of the time, what experience is that for you? What was that first experience for you like, that you still dwell in?
- S: Well, it's just a world that's bigger than I thought it was. I mean, when I was a little kid, having that awareness of "Oh, the world is bigger than this playground. And there's more going on here. I'm not alone." And it's like, Jung and all these people, you know, they didn't...Most of the time the spirits will not reveal themselves until we're in pain, until we're deeply suffering. And then we're feeling and then [laughs] it's like "Ahh! Hello! Hello, welcome aboard!"
- MS: So suffering serves as a bridge or cue to cue us into awareness.
- S: Yup.
- MS: Yeah, because I was curious, does the strength or presence of your inner guidance or inner clarity or, you've used a lot of different terms...but does that vary overtime?
- S: Yeah.
- MS: How so, the strength or presence of it, that connection?
- S: It depends what I eat, it depends on the company that I'm keeping, it depends on how much work I'm doing, am I looking after my body, am I getting enough exercise, am I saying yes to too many things? Am I giving away too much? Is there a reciprocity and balance? In other words, am I giving away more than I'm getting,

and am I getting more than I'm giving? All those things will throw me off. But if I give and get in equal measure, if I give and am open to receiving, because that's another thing. I realized we receive all the time [laughs] but we don't know it. We look at that tree, that bush, and that bush is giving us. Are we open to it? Well, most people aren't. That humble little bush, that little ordinary bush, very distinct. And for some obscure reason when we look at it, it waves at us. The bush next to it doesn't wave at us. See the bush next to it? And the minute we look at it, it starts to quiver. See the bush behind the tree over there, now it's not moving very much. But if you look at it, it will start to...there! [laughs] And on a perfectly still day, when there isn't a breath of air anywhere, and you start looking at something. Or if you catch a bird, look at a bird, and the bird will stay there and stay there and stay there, and the minute you blink it's gone. Because the energy's been broken. But that's feeding the bird, the bird's feeding us. So that's what I meant, is am I open to being fed? And it's the same with the spirits. They want us, the inner guidance, whatever you want to call it. It wants to be, our souls want to be acknowledged. That's why the arts are so important. Only, you know, very few teachers...I'm so glad they stopped teaching the arts in schools. Because they were killing it, [laughs] slaughtering it. Because the schools are just so screwed up, they've got almost nothing to do with the kids. And it's sad, you know. But it's just a phase.

MS: And I think you might have spoken to this in terms of the reflexivity piece in this last question, but how do you respond to those times when inner guidance is less available? In other words, how do you respond to *not* being in touch with the reflexivity? And you said it depends on your company, it depends on what you're eating and the balance of giving and receiving, etc. But is it just a question of shifting these circumstances or shifting...But again, to reiterate, how do you respond to those times when it's less available?

S: Well, sometimes I just go to bed. Sometimes I'll have a good meal. Or just food, and go to bed. And sometimes I can't sleep. Like sometimes there's just too much static. And so I've learned that I just, I'll try meditating. Sometimes meditation doesn't work, sometimes doing yoga doesn't work, sometimes tai chi doesn't work, sometimes going for a walk doesn't work...I used to smoke grass, and it was good because it would help me forget, and it's a big gift, it relaxed me. But then I would feel kind of fuzzy the next day. I just ask my body, "What do you want to do?" Sometimes I masturbate. I don't usually want to have sex with [name of wife] when I'm like that, you know, but it's just my energy needs to be harmonized. It's tough to get a good massage from people. Because the more aware you get who touches me gets to be a big deal. And same thing with the food that I eat. There's got to be some kind of

good energy to it. Or else I've got to give the food energy. You know, but it's still something coming out of me, kind of stuff. Sometimes I just pray, you know. Ask for guidance, ask for help. And with gratitude, you know, "What am I supposed to learn here?" Sometimes I just keep plodding, you know. Yeah, just push through it, it's no big deal. Sometimes I drink medicine. What else do I do? Sometimes I look at pictures. I look at pictures of [name of wife] or...sometimes go outside. I spend a lot of time looking at trees, they're good for that. They're really handy for giving energy. If I've lost the connection, you know, I just kind of remember, that oh yeah. And even if I'm not feeling it, the energy's coming in. Like my mind, I may be so up in my mind that my body can't feel it. And then there's all kinds of little tricks, OK. Like I'll go and just hug a tree or put my forehead up against a tree and just stay there for a long time and "Woosh!" the energy will shift. Or sometimes I'll just watch funny movies and laugh. And other times just laugh, just force myself to start laughing, even though I don't feel like laughing. Have you heard about the laugh clubs in China?

MS: Yeah. I wanted to start one at CIIS, but we never did.

S: Oh God, start a club! I've got a friend and she comes over and we laugh, usually for three or four minutes, and it feels great. And Kaiser came out with this study recently that said that if you smile or if you laugh it changes your saliva and makes you more immune to colds and flues. [laughs] What's another question?

MS: How does your inner guidance help you in knowing how to prioritize, decide upon, begin and/or embody specific psychospiritual orientations and practices? So in terms of psychological and spiritual development, how does this guidance tool help you to choose or prioritize decisions? Given that we live in a temporal realm.

S: In answer to your question, the word trust is coming up. And compassion. And waiting. So sometimes, as I said, when I don't know then I just wait. But there's sometimes, you can't wait, you've got to do something. It's necessary that something happen, but I don't know, there's no guidance. It's just the right thing or the wrong thing and so, sometimes I'll start doing something one way and by doing that, that's the signal. The "No, no, no, no," and the choices come in and it's like, "We're going over here." You know, it's like, "Yeah, yeah, good, I'm glad you're moving." [laughs] "Now come over here and go this way," it's that kind of stuff. But sometimes you can, I've learned that I can agonize, I can second guess myself to bits, you know. So what I do is I'll wait and I'll say, "Well OK, where are we going with this one?" Nothing's coming and then I get an idea and it's like, I don't know whether that feels right or not, but let's start in that direction and see how that feels.

And starting in the direction, and even if it's planning out the first three steps, or maybe it's actually starting to take action. And then, but while in doing that kind of listening, like, "Oh..." So if...Do you know about [name of wife] falling down the stairs? In the middle of the night, about one or two o'clock in the morning, she fell down the stairs and I heard this fall. She hit the first set of stairs, screamed, and then "bang, bang, bang," I could hear her head hitting the stairs. There's probably fourteen of them or something, and then there was this "kebunk!" and she was at the bottom. So I sprung up out of bed and I ran downstairs and her head was twisted around, and she was unconscious, and it was really frightening and I was from a dead sleep. It was, the bottom pile of the stairs were covered with urine, and to make a long story short, I was aware of all of the spirits, hers, mine, were right there, and I remember her legs were still. Her legs and her hips were still up on the stairs so that there was all this pressure on her neck. And I remember taking her head, holding her head, holding her neck and asking, like asking, just asking, "I need to know, is this safe to move her? Because this doesn't feel...Like, shit, if this isn't a problem, this is causing a problem, so how can we move this?" And it was, "Do it this way." And this huge, it wasn't intuition, it was just...I wasn't exactly a clear channel, I was certainly had a whole lot of stuff going on of my own. My own fear, my own, playing out my scenarios and saying, "No, that doesn't have to happen, that doesn't have to happen." And mentally setting up these energy fields around the whole situation. And then just letting my body do the work. Not my mind. And so I very gently slid her down onto the floor and I know her neck hadn't been broken and I knew it right down in the base of my spine. My neck knew her neck wasn't broken. And I was asking my neck and I was simultaneously, you know, "Is her neck OK?" And simultaneously beaming that her neck was OK. Like, being really grateful that she was OK even though there was part of me that didn't know that she was OK. There was part who was frightened that she was, so I was having to deal with the fear part of me and then there was this other bigger part me saying, "Well, and if she's not OK, then there's a bigger game going on here and we don't know what it is." And feeling a sense of all of the pain of all of the partners who are with those that are suffering like she was. And later on for about three to four hours this energy was coming from my hands and it wasn't mine. And my hands were moving around her body and just doing this and I didn't know what they were doing. So, having to take, do this discipline. You know, a lot of this work is about mental discipline, about making choices. Saying, "Yeah. No, yeah, no, yeah, no. Does this feel right? Yeah, nah." And this big fear wind could come through and, "Yeah, it's possible, but doesn't need to happen." You know, just taking...not being a victim to it, just being with it. Watching what fits, where the energies fit.

MS: Wow. How about taking this example of this specific circumstance and looking at how the same intelligence might steer you to choose how to decide, in terms of our spiritual growth, or psychological growth, where's your edge of learning? How to orient yourself in terms of the future and making choices that are right on your immediate horizon? I'm not sure if it's different practices, maybe it's all within the same framework of working currently with ayahuasca. But knowing when to use her, when to take a break...In other words, how do you prioritize decision-making in terms of the evolution of your spiritual and psychological development?

S: Does it feel right? What's presenting itself? What are my dreams? What are...Now they're like voices, and they're not, what are my thoughts, you know, where is my heart pulled? What catches my attention? What makes me smile?

MS: So paying attention to what's naturally arising and noticing your response to that as it arises.

S: Yeah. And, I guess, like it's interesting. It's like, there's part of me, no, I am aware, I have a desire, a strong desire to do yin yoga. I have a strong desire to sit and meditate for an hour a day. Here are a sequence of things that I've been doing for thirty years, a combination of tai chi and qi gung and yoga. And I love doing them, like I just, oh boy, and I love going for a walk, especially where I live, you know, nature...And for a long time now I wake up and I go to my office and I get to work. Because I want to do that more because this book has to be finished. So the book is a spiritual practice at this point as your thesis is to for you. And it is your legacy to the world, it's your gift. So when I get really fucked up and I can't, I'm fried, [laughs] and I do these things because they fuel my energy, you know, and the physical guidance I get from my body, going through the book. I don't feel bad about not doing the yoga, [laughs] because if you feel bad it's going to have a negative effect you know. [laughs] Sometimes I just remember doing the yoga. As I say it, it feels great, you know, so...

MS: So the shoulds are something that...

S: Oh, shoulds are like battery acid on your soul. Really, really, really. And that's what I get pissed off about all these spiritual practice guys: "You should do this, you should do this." Listen, does it feel right? You know, and sometimes the stuff that feels good, you shouldn't do it, you know. It's like, [laughs] it's like, you've got to pay attention. My friend [friend's name], have you met [friend's name], Matt? I keep thinking you've got to meet him. If you want to talk to somebody, go and talk to him. He's a Pomo shaman. He's a Pomo shaman and he was a drunk. And as he said, one day he woke and up and he wanted to kill a cop, he'd had it, he didn't

care, he just wanted to. Throw him in jail, they're going to electrocute him, he didn't care, he was going to kill a cop. And he went looking for a cop to kill and he had a gun. And he was going to go and kill a cop. And that night. The guy was drunk, he joined the Marines, you know, and suddenly the energy came in, and he's a very powerful counter-charismatic healer. He's what the Pomo call a *yungfa*. It's almost like a dreaming shaman. What he dreams comes true, so if you get him dreaming that you're going to be healthy, chances are you'll be healthy. And, you know, anyway go and see him sometime. He said, he's got a way with one-liners, he said, "That fast food, we all like to eat, it really slows us down." And he said, "Your favorite food probably isn't very good for you." And I've noticed, if you're attracted to blue-eyed blondes or something then it's probably not very good for you because you're gonna, you're more in love with your idea than of who this person is, you know. But aside from that level of liking things, like do you like them because it makes you feel good or do you like them because you're really attached to them? And if you're attached to something then that's, let that go. God, I've never had such a rambling talk. [laughs]

MS: [laughs] Just continuing this sense of prioritizing decision-making, how about right now? Are you in a place of your life right now where you feel like you're trying to make any big decisions? Is there something that you're going through right now that can serve as an example? In how guidance might be helping you guide this decision-making?

S: Yeah. I am putting six days a week, usually seven hours a day, into finishing, getting this book finished. The book's called, [title describing assisting children and teenagers with healthy development.] And it's a lot of work. I don't really enjoy it at one level but I enjoy it at another level and I'll be really happy when it's done. And there are a whole lot of other things I'd much rather do. But it's been going on for fourteen years and the messages keep coming: "You've got to finish it, so you might as well put everything else down and finish it." And sometimes it would stop itself and it would be like, all the messages would be, "Oh, put it down, stop worrying about it, it's going to get done, stop worrying about." And then two years later, you know, maybe a year later I start working on it again but from a completely different thing. And I realize that every time the voices would say, "Put it down," it was really important to put it down. Part of it, I mean one of the big delays, was so technology could catch up. I mean it sounds crazy, but it's also so the right people can emerge. When I started this thing, one of the chapters couldn't have been written because the woman was still a teenager. [laughs] She hadn't come into her path. And, you know, the last two years, the co-author is, I've had

to wait a year for her to get vibrating enough that she could do that. So I don't know if that answers your question.

MS: Yeah. I hear you saying that there are things that you'd rather do that are not the most pleasurable experience on one level but also, the knowledge that you need to do this persists?

S: Yeah.

MS: And there's a deeper level or deeper level of recognition that this feels right and trumps the temporary pleasure that could be gotten from doing other things.

S: And part of the work is really hard because, and spirit is really involved with this. These sessions, like we're having one tomorrow, there's a list of like 200 problems that kids have. Commonly will have. And you know, like educational abuse, there's lots of aspects, there are sexual abuse or abandonment or dying or kids got addicted parents, so there are all the different conditions that kids have. And so I write down some sentences on why it's important to take action for the kid. What can happen if no action is taken? And then what could be similar to the causes of the kid having that problem? And then, what we would try first, what we would try second, what we would want to have on a long-term basis of the kid and then some suggestions of things that parents could try on their own. And so when we're writing that it's a combination of mind and spirits. It's the wildest thing, Matt, because we're sitting in this room and I can sense all this. [laughs] It's like, sometimes it's like standing room in here and there's all this energy coming in. And I'm thinking about all the kids I've known that have had that and I'm saying to their spirits, "Well, what do you need, what would have helped you?" And they're chiming in. And it's a great experience, so I don't know how on the credits to give credit for it. [laughs]

MS: [laughs] Lots of co-authors!

S: Sometimes my assistant says, "You know so much," and I say, "Honey, no, it's not that kind of knowing." And what your work is about is about a different kind of knowing that people have learned not to trust. And we've learned not to trust this kind of knowing, because this kind of connection... Because, you know, there were some really bad things people did to one another for centuries. And they're still doing it. And the fear is trying to create more fear. And people get attached. Anyway. [laughs] What's another question?

MS: Is your experience of inner guidance as you've shared it today consistent with what you've read or learned about its role within the psychospiritual tradition within which you're practicing? I

mean, specifically ayahuasca. So do you feel a consistency there in terms of what you've heard or the literature you've been exposed to? Or the teachers, from let's say South America?

S: And it's unique because it's not... What I'm aware of is I'm bringing to this a Canadian, American, Scottish, and Native American focus on top of having had connection with what would commonly be called "spirit guides" all my life. And I'm realizing what a gift it's been. The more I talk about this and this experience and I think, "Oh my God." And it goes back to my mum, because my mum was.... The day before my mum died, she was lying in bed, she couldn't talk very much. She was fully present. And I said to her, I said, "Do you want to talk about the, you know, you're dying. Do you want to talk about, you know... [laughs] As far as I knew she had no spiritual, no spiritual tradition or practice. The arrogance of my assumption astounds me. And I said, "Do you want to talk about what different religious thinkers have thought about what happens when you die?" She said, "Yeah, that'd be neat." So I started talking to her about the *bardos*. And she looks at me with all the eagerness of a 12 year old kid. [laughs] She says, "Oh, they got it right." I said, "Oh, yeah, how do you know?" She said, "I was there." And she proceeded to describe in detail what was going on. I said, "Well, how do you know that?" She said, "Oh I died when..." you know, and described the time. She said, "I was dead, and," she said, "I was way out there, and I remember turning around. And I looked back and I could see my body in the operating room and then I could automatically see you. And I said to your father and to somebody else who I forget, 'If I keep going with you that little boy won't have a mother.' And I said, "Yeah." And she said, "Well I want to go back." And they said, "Well, you're going to have a tough life, kid." "It's OK." She came back. So, my mother, who's around, like all mothers are around their progeny. It's been a great gift too, because I didn't trust my mom. I didn't trust my dad when I was a kid and it hurt them a great deal.

MS: And so just a little bit more of how your unique heritage contributes or differs from, or how it compares to, how you sense that inner guidance has played a role with native practitioners from the realm of ayahuasca. In other words, in the tradition itself, how inner guidance plays a role, do you find how it's played a role in your life being consistent with what you've heard?

S: Yeah, it's consistent and it's different. I guess that's how I'd put it. I get very concerned that *gringos* go down to the jungle and they want to use the symbols and the cosmology of the ayahuasca cultures. And it doesn't work that way. And we are at a point of history where we have to share technologies. All the spiritual practices are holding a piece of it. And we can trade with one another. So, when I go down there I trade, I share, if they're open,

my experiences as a *gringo*, and they, it really helps. And their technology does help me. And yes, there are lots of overlaps and there's also great divergences as well. And so, the native cultures, people have wondered why the missionaries, the Christian missionaries, got so many converts. Well, they kind of only go half-convert. OK? [laughs] The people knew, in my opinion, were pretty clear about, "Well, we can take this but we can leave that. We'll take this, we'll take that." So they're mixing something new. And spiritual practices are very dynamic and the best of them are always borrowing stuff. And so the Tibetans came out of Tibet for two reasons. One is to share their technology, but the other is to get some technology from the people who've had to invent their own.

MS: And as far as the specificity of the inner guidance piece, do you feel that within this tradition from South America and you contributing, how that's specifically been different from stories you've heard, from locals down South?

S: Yeah, one of the big problems the good *Ayahuasceros* have is people follow the inner guidance without question. And they get clobbered. And they can create havoc.

MS: Because it's actually external guidance, not inner guidance.

S: Well, if it's inner guidance it's like living in the OM Hotel. And we can't live in the OM Hotel. We've got to keep visiting the OM hotel and if your feet aren't on the ground you're dangerous, you're really dangerous, you're liable to kill somebody or get killed yourself. And that's equally true in the jungle, only there's just a different set of rules, if you want.

MS: Did you notice at any time during this interview that inner guidance was operating, and have you drawn at any time upon your sources of guidance in our talk in responding to my questions?

S: Yes. Yes. My grandmother, my mother, my uncle, [friend's name] was here, he's the Pomo fellow. I could feel them. You know, you have dreams and people come to you in your dreams? Yeah. Well, it's the same in lots of ways, only you don't have to be asleep, you can feel their energy around you. And it's like being told, "Well, make sure you tell them about so and so." Because there's a whole other... You know, I could ask you, "Are your spirit guides helping you with this?" Yeah. And you know, I can feel that. So all our guides, all our inner guidances are all wanting to have a voice through you. Because this is a very important topic. Because most people are forced to deny the existence of a lot of their wisdom. Or to invent a whole lot of stories about how they got to know what they got to know. People are going to find that disease or

conditions can be healed by physicalizing. By like thinking about my mother, saying, "Hey Ma, come on, we're going to go back to my body without cancer." Just basically feeling good. It's like healing the body with the spirits, with whatever to feel good. To really feel good, to not fake feeling good, taking drugs or something. So I think about my grandmother and I smile and that changes my body chemistry into a more healthy way of doing things. So, sometimes spirits will come into my consciousness and I'll say, "Oh." Suddenly I'm thinking about them. Well, how did that process happen? Well, they were thinking about me. So whenever you think about somebody they're going to feel it. So if I'm thinking about my father then my father's been thinking about me. But he's been dead since 1988. He doesn't think about me that much, but sometimes he does.

MS: I think you actually did speak to this, but perhaps there's a further nuance that might come out. If you do make use of a certain strategy of using inner guidance, and I think you actually just spoke to this, could I invite you to try using it now to try answering my question of what it is?

S: Sure. [S sits in silence with eyes closed for 15 seconds] Well, Sai Baba said this amazing thing. Somebody said, "Are you God?" And he said, "Well, I'm no different than you are, but I know who I am." And an earlier time he said, "We're all, we are who other people think we are, we are whom we think we are, and we are God. And then what is God? And he said, 'Well, God is like, if God is the ocean, each of us are waves, so then is the wave not an ocean?' And so, this whole process of having this inner wisdom is like a construct that we need to kind of step down the energy of, of God. So that we can try to understand how it is that we know what we know and we get the guidance to do what we do. So there's a temple in Chavin, in Peru, called Chavin. And one of the things about this temple is that it's predicated on the belief that each person is the center of the universe, which I've experienced, and that all the information, everything, everything, everything, past present and future, is known to us, but it's too much. So we have to kind of get selective and then we forget that and we think, "Well, we don't know anything about it." Well, no, no. We haven't opened to it because it's a little too frightening to open to. And so these guides, if you want, or these spirits, are just kind of helping us to open a little bit more. And the nice thing about entheogens and especially entheogens in the right context, is that they really allow us to get the whole enchilada. And the big gift of your inquiry is that I think it's helping people realize that we know everything. I think Socrates was right. And the idea is you know everything, you just don't know you know it. And you need some help to know what is, what everybody else knows. So the guides are real helpers in that regard. That's what came through. And that's from a source

that if I could describe...It's like there's this energy source that's like a collage and as I look in any direction there are figures that are identifiable. But really, they're just like, they're kind of taking responsibility for being able to give me, not to give me, for my soul to be able to give me to use, for that energy to come through and out into the world. For other people. So there's this reciprocity. We're flowing energy all the time. So was that happening here? It was throughout. And some days I would hope that I get to be coherent and be able to talk lucidly about this instead of like a series of poems. [laughs] Might make a good poem. Like phrases. It was quite a struggle, because sometimes I didn't want to use any verbs. It was like trying to paint mental, not mental, but put words together so that the words would evoke an energy. Because I don't know how else to describe it. This field of, it feels a little like a geodesic dome, and it's quite fuzzy and it's kind of gold and yet it's robin's egg blue as well, this field, and it has patterns. [laughs] The patterns are blue and magenta, which is funny. Not always blue. Blue, magenta and gold. Maybe you know what that means. And I just realized what a great gift it's been to not be able to read. Got a pile of Buddhist scholars for friends and I love hanging out with them. And I say, what about this? You ever seen this? And they say, yeah. It's really funny. I remember the migration of souls and every so often I just get knocked over. Like if I get really, really, really tired, or if I get ill. Sometimes with entheogens. And man, I'm like, watching the movement of souls. Watching. And something else I want to tell you. I've had the experience of me coming forward in time and coming to me and me going back in time, going to me. And one of the things that happens with people that have been abused, for instance, if they get to the point of being compassionate with themselves and with the perpetrators, is that they're able to be clear enough to go back to be with themselves as children who were being abused. And children after that. And they participate in the healing and in the keeping of that kid alive. Then tailoring the experiences to help that kid stay alive. And I think that there are a lot of people who are being helped by beings, spirits, whose work it is to help people heal, really heal. Not forget and keep going. But to really heal these great wounds that are being inflicted. And all that is this return to *dharma* that is happening. One of the things about ayahuasca and entheogens is that some of the images and some of the spirits they will attract are common to different people regardless of the culture. But, overall, they tend to use the person's own symbolism, the person's own cosmology. And it's something that's really critical, so that you've people who will study the cosmology and then have the experience and say, "Oh, I saw this, I saw this, I saw this, I saw this." And in lots of ways that's cheating. And it's interesting to get people who have had no experience, like nothing, no spiritual practice, they don't know anything. And they take this stuff and it's like, uh-huh, OK.

And then you've got things happening to them that are in lots of ways very illuminating.

- MS: So for those who have not been inculcated in a previously manifested cosmological realm of symbology, etc., how would you advise them to do work with ayahuasca to help get back to that primary state of pre-influence?
- S: Just ask the medicine. Enjoy it. And to say, "It's more than this. And it's actually less than this." So the less than this... Well Sai Baba really summed it up when he was talking about all the world's religions. And he had this great little line. And it's really germane to this. He said, ultimately the world's religions can be compared to lots of bottles. And they're different colors, sizes, shapes and textures. But he said everybody pays attention to all that but not what's inside the bottle. So when drinking ayahuasca or taking any entheogen, look to simplify. And what you come down to, the Beatles were right. All you need is love. And the love is like the reciprocity of energy. The reciprocity of positive energy and of saying no to fear. And it's like, letting go of desire, letting go of attachment to form, emptying out. For me, the Buddhists have probably got it closer than anyone else. So when working with entheogens, realize that a lot of the spirit guides that come, some of them you've kind of preprogrammed and they're taking this form. It's just like, "Oh, you'll listen to Buddha?" [laughs] Then we'll play Buddha tapes! You know, but it's the energy. It's like, what's the energy that you get from listening to Buddha? And if you're Hindu, maybe it's going to be Krishna.
- MS: I was going to ask you about any advice you might have for a first-time participant of ayahuasca, or even those who have had a lot of experience, in terms of setting intentions or asking for guidance. Anything that you would advise, just to synthesize, how you might approach this work to better be able to tune into one's inner guidance in this experience?
- S: Feel the feelings fully. Just relax into what's, like to just not thinking about it. Feel it, where is it in your body, and relax, relax, relax, relax. Because every place that you're not relaxed, that's where the attachment and the blockage and the fear is. So as an exercise, just keep relaxing. And when you hit some place where you can't relax, here you use your tools, you know. You ask the spirits for help, you breathe, you sit up, you force yourself to listen to the music or listen to the silence. Or focus on your edge. And the idea is, let's see if we can go. And then you go back. Now, let's see if we can think that same pile of thoughts and be relaxed about it. And then when that happens, then you get the inner guidance coming in, because then you can relax enough. It's really tough to

get the inner guidance if you're not either relaxed or so frightened that you're jumping out of your body.

MS: And you also mentioned set and setting before. Any recommendations for the ideal set and setting?

S: Yeah, quiet. I mean quiet is the biggest, hardest thing to get. And all the senses, beautiful. And somebody said, you know, if somebody told you the Queen of England or somebody really special, if Quan Yin was coming to your humble home, how would you fix it up? That gives you a clue. Woops, I'd better clean the hotel, ooh, clean the toilet. So it's all very simple things. You know, you make the air smell nice. If there's ugly sounds puts soft, nice music on. If there's big messes somewhere, cover them up so everything looks pretty.

MS: And as far as setting intentions?

S: Well, I tend to like the idea of, "Reveal to me what I can see, help me understand my milieu. Help me to learn how to relax and to open to life, instead of closing to it." And as I say that, I can feel it in my body. My pelvis floor just dropped, my belly dropped, my cock dropped. And the focus is bringing the energy down into your pelvis. Get it out of our heads. And it's so hard, because you're in the head business. Probably less so than a few who are going to Harvard Divinity or something like that.

MS: I'm trying to keep it more the heart business, but there's a lot of challenges to that.

S: Sure. But the idea is that the secret is really simple, it's not complicated. And there's a lot of thing to occupy the mind, to help the mind relax, you know. And sometimes all the fancy thoughts and stuff like that, it keeps the mind busy enough here you can relax. It's like, sometimes I think a lot of spiritual writings, like 500-piece crossword puzzles, you get to the point where you can relax. And it's like, "Oh, I've just gone through, this." It occupies your brain so your body can have a rest... Well, thanks a lot, Matt. You've made me think. Maybe we should do another interview, [laughs] because man oh man, you got me thinking about stuff. It was so good to plug into that. Sometimes that place, you know, is blue, it's robin's egg blue, it's like being inside a blue pearl... Thanks and good luck.

Interview with Diamond Logos/Buddhist Practitioner [D/B]

MS: I'm interested in your lived experience of what I'm calling "inner guidance." And I'm putting it in quotes because I don't really know what it is. There's lots of spiritual and pedagogical literature about this, but not a lot of people have said, "Hey, this is what it was like for me as a unique being in time and space." So Carl Jung did this, which was a great service, saying, "Hey, this happened to me, and I don't know what to make of it!" But there's not a lot of actual lived narratives about it. So whatever kind of comes to you for inner guidance, wonderful. I'm not looking for anything specific.

D/B: OK

MS: But I *am* interested very much specifically in the fact that you're both in the Diamond Logos tradition and also in the Vajrayana tradition. So please feel free to speak from each one, if you would like to be reflexive with each of these traditions. If explicitly, great. If not, wonderful too. But the fact that you're embodying all of those perspectives makes it all the more richer.

D/B: OK.

MS: So one of my initial interests is with the developmental aspect of this. And I'm interested in how you initially came to locate this source or process of what I'm calling "inner guidance"?

D/B: OK. Well, first what comes to mind, actually what comes to mind to me really doesn't have anything to do too much with being in either of those traditions specifically. Although of course, you know, all of my practice in Vajrayana and practice in Diamond Logos has contributed to opening up, I would say, the inner guidance more and more and more. But it's been quite active I would say most all my life, pretty much, from the time I was about three years old, where I had this very strong dream that I was, you know, not really wanting to fully join being here, when I was a young person. I had a dream that was clearly out of the ordinary, I've remembered it my whole life. And two men came, one of whom I later identified as Faisal, you know, when I met him. I thought, "Oh, that's the guy, that's one of the guys from my dream." But it was like they were spiritual uncles, these two guys. And in the dream they came and took me on this flying carpet and then flew out so we could kind of go out from my house. And then they said, "Do you remember why you came here?" And so what they did was they jogged my memory. And then I remembered that I decided to come here and at three years old. It wasn't like a whole

articulated thing, but it jogged my memory and my consciousness of deciding to do this and everything. And I remembered the next morning I woke up and I decided to eat food. And before that my mother said I wouldn't hardly eat and all my ribs were sticking out and she took me to the doctor and everything. And I had a very loving family. But, so that was my first, and even though it was a dream, you know, I think it was a kind of inner guidance that reflected itself through the dream.

MS: Did you recall this dream from a later age, or...

D/B: No, I recalled it my whole life. And then I think that...there's been spontaneous insight, like the next time I remember when I was fifteen and I was working during the summer to help end the Vietnam war and all of a sudden I had this insight that all the wars and aggressions came from, you know, our internal strife. And so it was like an insight. But I decided I would work upon completely alleviating any war within me. And it was useless to try to stop the war outside, you know, it was better that first I try to stop the war inside, any of that going on. And so then I started to work on that. So again, that was like an insight that came very strongly that really then set the course of my life. So you know, at fifteen I didn't realize it was a long-term project, [laughs] you know. And then the third time that was really powerful...

MS: How did that insight come, how did it arrive?

D/B: I just remember, I grew up in Marin, I just remember, I was walking down the street and I had been, you know, just doing all this work in this office and I thought, "This is just useless, it's just kind of, we're not, we're just pushing things around, but we're not getting to the real core." And then I just thought, you know, "The core is inside each of us so I have to really work on that." So it just came spontaneously.

MS: As a thought.

D/B: Yeah, yeah. And then the next really strong time was when... Just as an aside, I did have some interesting psychedelic experiences. I pretty much, well yeah, completely, used psychedelics when I was young as, like, for spiritual practice. So I had some pretty profound stuff that happened with that. But the next time that was past that time, when I was about 24, 25, I really actively began praying to meet my guru. And I was just studying in different traditions. I was studying Zen and in Hinduism, mystical Christianity, I was studying with a Sufi teacher, and I was praying. And I was praying to Mary and I was praying in general and somebody dragged me off to [name] Rinpoche to go to one of his talks. And in five minutes

I instantly knew he was my teacher. And so that never wavered. It's just been like that ever since. And that was thirty years ago.

MS: And what provided the inspiration to pray to meet your guru?

D/B: Well, because I was studying all these spiritual traditions and practicing in different spiritual traditions, but I didn't feel like I'd met my teacher. Like I had some really good teachers that I loved and with whom I had good connection, but it just didn't feel like my teacher in the sense of my guru, you know, that kind of thing. It just didn't feel like that. So I think for me, I've always been highly intuitive. I'm sort of zero on sensate and completely on the intuitive on the typology scale. [laughs] And so I get guidance through my intuition. And so, and then, just meeting Rinpoche, it was like, it was just this deep knowing. And like I said, that's never even wavered for like one second. It was just like such a deep knowing, it was just there and it's always been there.

MS: I know this is a silly question when these things are so deep and obvious...

D/B: Mm-hmm...

MS: But had you had this experience before, such a deep recognition, or was this a novel experience?

D/B: Um...I think I've always had certain kinds of knowing. Like I remember past life, like I knew when I was as little as I can remember, thinking, like, you know before three years old, like I remembered I was in other places. That was part of it. It was like, this place didn't really appeal to me that much and so I had knowing of things. And then, um, what other kinds of things? Um...there was this inner knowing when I was little, like two years old, that I had a mission to complete here and do in the world. Um...I think why that dream was so significant, even though I'd known before I had a mission to do in the world or a reason, you know, work to do, that was also some outside support, because I felt so alone in all of that, you know. I mean, again, my parents are very loving but I never communicated any, any, I had a lot, not a lot, but I had some very powerful mystical experiences as a child, but I never told anyone. You know, I just, it wasn't that they weren't very loving and I didn't love them. I just didn't think they'd understand. It just never occurred to me to talk to them about it, I just never would. So there was a knowing that people wouldn't understand, you know, and it wouldn't be appropriate to share with them. And...There was also like a knowingness about death. Like, um, thinking that I always had that also, from when I was a small child. And then when I was, by the time I was in my late teens I really felt like that transition between the time and

death are very potent. So there was a knowingness of the potentness of that time. So like with Rinpoche and knowing that, um, I'm trying to think, um...It's just like an absolute certainty in my heart. So it wasn't like something I decided to believe or it wasn't constructed like that. It was just absolute, you know, there, so, like that.

MS: And when you said the word intuition, is that synonymous for you right now with inner guidance?

D/B: Um...I don't think, not necessarily. No, I think they're different. But um, another thing that was very powerful in terms of inner guidance was, in the early 90's I started feeling like, and it ended up feeling like, or maybe it was the late 80's, I don't know. At some point in time I ended up feeling like I was here, but like, I had this feeling like, "Well here I am, I'm showing up at the theater, I'm on the stage, but like where's my part?" What am I, you know, what am I supposed to do now, like, you know? And then I got this feeling I was pregnant and I had this feeling I was pregnant with the feminine spiritual, but I had no idea what it was about. And it took many, many years, like between six to nine years. And it felt like I was pregnant and I didn't know with what and I, so I would like tune in and just ask for the guidance to be revealed. And that took a very long time and it finally birthed itself as [name of spiritual center]. And that was an interesting process, because for like ten years I went back and forth on whether I should teach or not. And I had been teaching since 1986, but you know, if you don't start your own center or have a major commitment, you know, you can always get out of it, sort of. But, every time I'd be thinking I was going to get out of it there would be something that would keep me in. Like somebody would ask me to do something and I'd feel like for some reason a responsibility or obligation, you know. So I'd, and then I went through a really big thing right before I started [name of spiritual center], you know, did I want to do this or not? 'Cause I have a very strong part of me that just wants to be on a mountain top. And I would have I'm sure done that if I hadn't gotten pregnant with [my daughter] in like 87. So...

MS: And as far as being pregnant with the feminine spiritual, the birthing was the foundation, you realized.

D/B: Yeah. But so I kept opening to receiving guidance during that period and it took a really long time, it took years. And then, meanwhile, I was going on this back and forth about really whether I wanted to teach or not. So I wasn't thinking the pregnancy, I didn't know if it had anything to do with starting anything or teaching or not or what. It was just completely, I was clueless and I just kept opening myself to you know, kind of, tune in to that what was there. And um, I did somehow start to receive the guidance in

little pieces, like about founding the center. So that was really different, it came over a long period of time and I was still in this conflict about really whether I wanted to teach or not and then finally I resolved that. I decided I would.

MS: Yeah, because I'm so interested in this idea that one, you said there was this knowing with [name] Rinpoche, where it was, you said, beyond intuition in a sense. And then the sense of this gradual unfolding of this inspiration that came almost in little packets of information?

D/B: Yeah. Little tiny pieces over years, yeah.

MS: And do these seem like very different domains of experience, the intuition, the downloading?

D/B: I think it all has to do with intuition, but I think that all intuition is not guidance.

MS: Ah. Will you say more about that?

D/B: So all of those I think are intuitive experiences, but there are a lot of intuitive experiences that I don't think is necessarily guidance. It's just intuition about things. You know what I mean? I mean, you could, um...Because when I think about a lot of my inner work, and especially the whole period when I worked with [Diamond Logos instructor] one on one for about eight years, you know the whole process was highly intuitive with me, you know. Just going in and sensing and feeling and looking and understanding. And that was all an intuitive process. Although it was, you know, grounded in the body. And yet, I don't think that was...I mean, in one sense you could say the Diamond Body was guiding me, or my Being was guiding me to uncover or to unwind certain things. In that way you could look at it as guidance. But a little bit different than, in terms of guidance of, like, about outer things. It was more like guidance about inner things. I want to tell you one other really strong thing that happened. Because all of these are somewhat different. So, when I was thirty, actually right around my thirtieth birthday, I was up in British Columbia on Salt Spring Island with my guru, [name] Rinpoche, and receiving empowerments for three year retreat, which I was supposed to do maybe in Asia, in Bhutan, or Darjeeling in India or something. And all these people started telling me, "Oh, you should do retreat with us." Because it was initiation for starting a three year retreat on that island. And I just thought, well I'm just coming up here to take these empowerments because it takes weeks to give them and I didn't want my teacher to give them separately at some time for me. So, everybody was saying, "Oh, you should do retreat with us." And I had a ten year old child and, you know, I wasn't thinking of doing retreat right at

that moment. I was living in Asia, actually, in Bhutan. So, but everybody kept saying that. And so I thought about it and I thought that, "Well, I should think about this." And then I went to Rinpoche and I asked him. And he did a divination, which is something Tibetans do. They do this thing called *mo*, that's a certain kind of divination. There's different ways they do it, but he did that. And he said that, "The *mo* is very good, but you should really think it over carefully, you know, and decide if you want to do this. It's a big decision." So he said, "Just take all the time you want." [laughs] It was so Rinpoche. "Take all the time you want. Really, this is so important. And then let me know what you decide." So after about two and a half hours he called me back in and he said, "Well, the builders just told me they need to know, like right now. [laughs] Whether you're doing this like now because they've got to build you a house if it's happening." So, he said, "You need to really decide today," or whatever. So that was the time I really, I *prayed* for guidance. And I completely let, I think this is something about guidance, that you need to let go of your ego, I feel, to have authentic guidance. So I completely let go of any preference of doing it or not doing it. No ego preference at all. Or wanting or not wanting any way or the other. And I had actually been praying to do three-year retreat at that time. And I had told my husband even before I married that I was going to do it. So I just went into that very open state of no preference and I prayed, you know. Well, I was trying to receive guidance and I decided to walk barefoot out on the mountain. And where this mountain was, it was the top of an island. And then if you looked west you could see Vancouver island, if you looked south you'd see the Olympic mountains, and north you'd see these other snow mountains. And it was really beautiful on the top of this, where this retreat land was. So I just went walking barefoot out on the top of the mountain, it was like July. And you know, trying to open to receive guidance. And this snake crossed my path. And I'd been up there three weeks and had not seen a snake, and it was a very unusual, beautiful snake with like coral and diamonds on it's back, and very beautiful. And [name] Rinpoche was year of the snake in Tibetan and Chinese astrology, which indicates wisdom in that system. So I thought, "OK, if I see three snakes I'm going to know I'm supposed to do this." That thought, I just decided, it just came to me, because a snake and that felt to me like a sign. But I didn't know, you know, for sure. So then I said to myself, "If I see three snakes I'll know I'm supposed to do retreat." And within five minutes I saw two more snakes. [laughs] So I thought, "Well, OK, that's it, you know." [laughs]

MS: Wow. So I understand this idea of being preference-free in terms of receiving the guidance. But in terms of the emanation of the arising of the thought about the two other snakes, that also seemed to come from a place beyond ego?

D/B: Yeah. Yeah. It just, I mean, it was just a way of knowing, of receiving guidance.

MS: That's very interesting. Because there's the call and response there, which were both initiated by you. And yet both the call and the response were an egoless process that was confirmed in the external realm.

D/B: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I don't think you can really have your ego involved if you're going to get clear guidance. Because there will always be preferences.

MS: Yeah. For some reason I'm really fascinated by this idea of, "If I see two more snakes..." How did you trust *that* kind of gauntlet being thrown down?

D/B: Well, I hadn't seen a snake for three weeks. We'd been walking out on the mountain all day long, every day.

MS: I understand the confirmation of seeing more snakes and the inspiration of that thought from seeing the first snake...

D/B: Oh, you mean, why three? Or why the thought came?

MS: How you could trust that if I see two more snakes... Trusting *that*...

D/B: Oh, because I was really open to all the awakened beings. I had consciously really opened myself to all the awakened beings and I was *really* praying for guidance. And so when that snake came that was so beautiful and so unusual, *right* in that moment when I was really praying for guidance, it was too unusual. That I hadn't seen one and then right in that very moment when I was really praying, when I was just like really open and trying to receive, that came. And it was the connection with [name] Rinpoche of the snake...

MS: Right, I get all this, though... At the point of saying, "If two more snakes arise..."

D/B: Oh, because I couldn't trust just one snake, I couldn't be sure that was a sign.

MS: But trusting that original thought. Was it because of the nature of 3 and the symbolism of 3 that you could trust that when that thought arose of, "If two more snakes come," that it was authentic...

D/B: Yeah. I think it would have been... It was so... If I had seen three right away, it was so unlikely, it was totally unlikely, given that I was there three weeks and I hadn't even seen one. So to see two

more immediately, you know, I said that because it seemed like that would be very unlikely. Three is a sacred number in Buddhism. And you know, the whole connection of the snake with Rinpoche. And so it was kind of like saying, "OK, if this is my guidance then show me three times so I'll know, so I will know that this is the guidance."

MS: And it wasn't like, "If one more snake, then...no, no no...If two more snakes...yeah, that feels right."

D/B: Nothing like that.

MS: Boom.

D/B: It was just, boom, yeah.

MS: Yeah, I guess I just get interested in when we kind of lay down a gauntlet like that. Like, if this kind of question that I pose is confirmed, *then*...But how to distinguish superstition from...

D/B: I think that, I usually don't do things like that. But it was a highly potent situation and it was a very time-crunch situation. And already we had been receiving empowerments for three weeks. So there was a huge amount of feeling of all of these awakened beings being present there. First [name] Rinpoche, I mean, had been calling all these awakened beings to be there. Karmapa had been there previously and done a ceremony with the Native American medicine man from that area, because he had seen the local Native American god in his vision and so they got together and did a ceremony to consecrate that land for retreat. So there was a lot of potent energy, particularly in that moment with these empowerments happening. And then, you know, just having to decide like in a couple of hours.

MS: And you usually also don't do that, ask for that kind of immediate, "If, then..."

D/B: No. Yeah, I would never usually do that. So I think it was just sort of an urgent situation. [laughs] You know...Because I *had* to have a way of knowing. I couldn't decide it through my ego. I just couldn't. There was no way I really could. Because I knew on an ego level there was no way I could tell what was right to do. You know, the thing that was so heavy was that I had a son and I had a husband who wasn't there at the time. So it was a very heavy thing. Meanwhile, I think it was after that, after I decided to do it, my husband, I called him and then he, he was a Rinpoche in Bhutan and was raised with the royal family. And then the Queen Mother telegrammed [name] Rinpoche saying, you know, because my husband freaked out and the Queen Mother was saying, "Don't let

her in!" [laughs] Because my husband was so bereft and everything. Even though he knew I was going to do it, he got really bereft. And so meanwhile [name] Rinpoche's passport was held by the Bhutanese government. So he was, basically, his passport was in the control of the royal family and they were telegramming him saying, "Don't let her in!" [laughs] But he handled the whole thing. [laughs] So anyway, that was a different case. So it seems to me like the time of the dream, just that knowingness that came with meeting [name] Rinpoche, that retreat was a different, all those were different kinds. And then when I started [name of spiritual center], that was a really long lost in the desert kind of process. [laughs]

MS: Interesting. So all different kinds and yet all having that same flavor of the conviction that followed and the response felt unshakable...

D/B: Yeah. Yeah. I'm like that. Like once I make a decision...I mean I can change, like if it's like administrative work. Like if I say something at the center and they'll say, "But [name]..." I'll be like, "OK, OK, just change it." You know, I'm not like stuck on that kinds of stuff. But if I come through a process...I don't know, it gets back to that knowing in your heart. Like having that conviction that isn't constructed. So I think that's a very interesting point. You know, and with Faisal's work, actually, I think my inner seeing, an inner...I don't know if I'd call it so much guidance as my intuition and my ability to see was greatly enhanced. Because I'm supposed to be a seer. Or that's what people say. Like in my palm and stuff. And I do see things. I have all my life. But certain kinds of things, you know, which has opened up a lot more from spiritual practice. I think that happens to people. When you do a lot of spiritual practice you just have more inner seeing, whether it's sensory or, you know, whatever modality it comes to you. And with inquiry work and with Faisal's work too, you know, you do. So, what happened to me with work with [Diamond Logos instructor] was really strong development of my inner seeing. And that followed on the fact that I'd already done three year retreat. So I was already, my inner seeing was much more clarified. And the ability to see was, I wouldn't say it's just inner. A *subtle* level of seeing, I guess you'd call it. Because it could be outer as well as inner.

MS: Could you describe the process of seeing?

D/B: Well, like on an outer level...Because, being that I was so spiritual all my life, it didn't seem to me that I had very many spiritual experiences. When I looked back when I was older and I heard about other people being very different, I realized that I'd had these mystical experiences. But I never thought of myself that way.

MS: It was the water you were swimming in...

D/B: Well, it seemed like such a desert being born in America. It seemed so bereft of spiritual energy here for me that it felt more like crossing this big desert or something. So, I was saying that because...Oh. So, I never really, yeah, thought that, you know...I mean I did a lot of spiritual practice and didn't have any particularly strong spiritual experiences, you know, so it just seemed like I was working hard, if you know what I mean. But nonetheless, you know, again in retrospect, things were opening, I was starting to see. So for example, like, I remember shortly after three year retreat I was looking at this fellow and I could just see he was crooked but you couldn't really see this outside. But it turned out he did have to have back surgery. But it wasn't anything you could see outside. I could just tell. That kind of thing, you know. So things like that, you know, about people or something. But generally I don't look. In fact all my life I've always felt it's very rude to look at people very carefully. I think because I have this seeing aspect and it feels very, like, impolite. And it's in my astrological chart too, so I've tried to *not* really see. And also there's a lot of suffering for me to see.

MS: And for yourself, does that seeing have a reflexive quality?

D/B: So then *that* was highly developed in my work with [Diamond Logos instructor]. That inner seeing of myself and going through that whole process. That I'd call an inner seeing because it was seeing things in myself. But it was also seeing the collective. Like I've done a lot of work in the collective unconscious. But, going, I mean, how to say it, in an inner exploration if that makes sense. You know, like when you explore internally there are some things that are very personal and there are some things that bleed into the collective. You know, psychological issues or whatever. So then it's an inner seeing, but then it's of collective as well as one's personal stuff.

MS: Does it have a relational quality to it, this inner seeing process? I'm trying to think of how it might relate to guidance...Of guiding yourself at times, as if you were sort of able to...

D/B: Well, that's where I think that it is a *kind* of guidance. It's, I mean, Faisal calls it being guided by the Being, your actual Being.

MS: And in that tradition of the Diamond Logos, maybe we can look in that context. What does that mean, being guided by the Being?

D/B: That the Being will, if you open and invite whatever to come up, whatever is helpful, you know, to come up or reveal itself so it can unwind or release or untangle. Then, you know, the idea is that

you just trust the Being to bring. So you're just opening to whatever comes. So then, say, all these things that seem to make no sense might come. And then you have to just completely suspend any judgment. And what I've found over and over and over again with myself and clients is that if you just allow to come what comes, then it all makes, it'll always make complete and perfect sense once you get to the end of it. But it'll seem really weird. Like, why am I getting all of a sudden this vision of being beheaded? What does that have to do with anything? So I had this really, this is an example of how bizarre stuff is, kind of, in a way, when you're doing inner exploration. But like, whenever I would go like look for a place to rent, or like, a little bit when I went to shop to buy a house, it just like would really creep me out. I mean, it would give me this weird feeling and I would just feel like, just, I'm not going to find a place. It was just depressing always. I didn't like doing that at all and I'd feel like I wouldn't find a place. So I remember, I think I was buying a house in Palo Alto, and so I was working with [Diamond Logos instructor], and somehow, I don't know, somehow that was up. And somehow we went into it, like what was that all about as a inquiry. And it took me all the way back to conception to a very powerful thought I had at conception, which was, "There's no room for me here. There's no space for me." And that unconscious, very, very strong thought had like affected my whole life. And so when I went to look for this place, space to be, I would always have this really weird feeling that there wasn't going to be a place or anything. You know, just bizarre kind of stuff like that. So in the process itself I think if you just open and let things reveal, if you don't judge it, if you don't try to think, "Is this real or not real?" you just go along with it, you know, and then see what, and you figure, well, it's either real or metaphorical or whatever, you know, the symbology of what you see or feel or hear. Then what I've found is that it all makes perfect sense in the end. Psychologically, I mean. Whether or not it was an actual reality or whatever. But, you know, psychologically it will all make really good sense.

MS: And going along with it means relaxing, not judging, just allowing...

D/B: Yeah. Like people say, they just, like, yeah, like something funny will come up that they're sensing, feeling. But people say, they'll start throwing stuff out, like, "Oh, that's nothing." Or, they won't even tell you about it. Or they won't consciously attune to it because they think it's erroneous. But in that process nothing is erroneous. You have to follow it. It's like following breadcrumbs. And then, and so everything is important, even if it looks like it had nothing to do with anything.

MS: And you'd mentioned that that Being is, you can trust that, *when* you're summoning that desire for guidance with the motivation of something to be *helpful*.

D/B: Well, I think that's how it's done in Diamond Logos, is that, well, one, there's two things mainly. Because one would be just for guidance, about any topic or something in your life. The other thing is to unravel old patterns or psychological blocks. Or unravel what's between, you know, me and full awakening. So in *general* the inquiry in Diamond Heart is to unravel whatever is between us and full awakening. So then you just invite, you know, trusting that the divine intelligence of Being will reveal what needs to be unwound at that particular moment.

MS: In service of awakening. It's not an arbitrary destination.

D/B: Right. Right.

MS: If the motivation was different, would that same quality of guidance arise? If it was more for selfish ends, or let's say for more potentially destructive ends?

D/B: I think if you open to that which is beyond ego, you know you're probably going to hopefully receive that which is beyond ego. If you're opening, you know, it's not really opening if you're trying to figure something out with your mind. Then you're going to be figuring it out with your mind. It's not really like you're asking for guidance, then. You know what I mean?

MS: Yeah, yeah. Because one of my core curiosities in this study is the discernment between authentic and false sources of guidance.

D/B: Yeah. How do you discern that.

MS: Exactly.

D/B: Well, you know, one of the ways for me, like, in that ten years struggle between should I teach or not teach, was a very subtle kind of discernment about what the ego is wanting. And so the more I could discern, like, that my ego actually wanted to go away and do retreat, but was that really what I was supposed to be doing? Right, was that really in alignment with my destiny? So, you know, I think in each of us we have to go through a really, like, powerful but subtle discernment process to discern any ego clinging or any ego preference. You know, kind of really step by step, to see where that preference is. So to me, to receive authentic guidance there has to be no ego preference. Otherwise it's an ego thing.

MS: And the way to ultimately trust that it's not ego is to recognize, you start off by recognizing what feels like ego, and just by recognizing it that will drop away.

D/B: Yeah, I can *feel*, you know. I think when you start really opening and looking objectively you can feel where there's ego stuff holding.

MS: So when you recognize the ego flavor, that stuff just sloughs away and what remains is the authentic.

D/B: Yeah. And sometimes that takes a long time. You know, like that process of deciding whether I would teach or not. Because, you know, there were, there are authentic reasons why to do retreat. And not teach. And it was sort of a back and forth between those two. So, because I basically figured if I'm in the world I might as well do something. Because people had always asked me to teach and that kind of thing, so up to the time I had started [name of spiritual center], it was people mainly asking, so then I would just do that and whatever. So, I think that the more we learn to be objective with ourselves, then, and let go of preferences, we get better and better at it. Because then we can taste or smell, sort of, the ego's preference, you know. And we also get to know our own ego better and know what our ego wants. So we can realize that, "OK, that's my ego preference, so that's what the ego wants." I mean, it could be that that's in alignment with our destiny, but it may not be. So it's not like totally throwing that out, but recognizing, "Oh, but that's an ego preference." And I think we can have our ego preferences fulfilled sometime, but they may or may not be fulfilled. So it doesn't necessarily mean that we wouldn't be guided to do something *and* it might be the ego's preference as well.

MS: This could be a redundant question, but do you feel a developmental aspect at play in terms of coming to greater clarity?

D/B: Yeah. In one sense you could say like I've had very strong guidance all my life. But those times when it happened when I was young it was just like a flash that came through. But in terms of *consistent* feeling about being aligned with guidance or a consistent ability to maybe receive guidance, I think that's developmental. In other words, the door might come open every once in a while, but to actually be able to open the door ourselves is I think developmental.

MS: And what seems to keep that door open, or increasingly ajar?

D/B: Well, I think the objectivity. You know, like I was saying. And the willingness to look, to ask, to look, to be objective and to see and

receive what's there. But I also do think, even though it is a developmental thing that we can get better at, we can develop, I also think that there's certain things that, like for whatever reason, are hidden from us. And we're just not supposed to be able to know about those things. So I also believe that if it isn't helpful for us to know those things, really, you know, then it may be that we may be open to receiving guidance about that, but we're not going to get very far. You know what I mean? It's not something you can have control over completely.

MS: You've mentioned different spiritual practices. You've mentioned in particular the Diamond Logos, the process of inquiry...

D/B: Yeah, and I think Vajrayana really prepared them for that. I mean, doing a lot of Vajrayana made it where my work with [Diamond Logos instructor] just went unbelievably fast. And he said that. I mean, it's really different if people have done a lot of spiritual practice. It starts going really, really fast. Especially if you've already done a lot of practice about letting go of your ego, you know, and a lot of ego dismantling. Then it starts going really fast. But it really honed it at that point.

MS: And I realize that some of these teachings are secret teachings, but you've mentioned in the Vajrayana tradition of actually asking or praying for guidance as a conduit. You've mentioned inquiry as one particular practice, right?

D/B: Yeah.

MS: Are there any other specific spiritual practices that actually encourage that door to be ajar more consistently?

D/B: Well, in Vajrayana you call upon the awakened beings consistently throughout the day. And definitely whenever you sit to meditate. So I think calling upon awakened beings, you know, is like... You know, at one point in three year retreat I felt like, "Oh my God, they've come in the back door." It's sort of like they came in my back when I wasn't looking. Because I was like, "Well, no wonder, I've been calling on them, you know, like two and a half years, [laughs] you know, or even years before that. But you know, putting a lot of emphasis in that in three-year retreat, there's a lot of prayer that goes on in Vajrayana. A huge amount. So, you know, it's like it's not surprising that somehow you feel like, you know, they've entered, sort of, you know, because you do pray for that blessing and transmission of the awakened beings. So I think that openness to that, you know. And I personally feel, and I think this is how Faisal said it too, that it's called in Diamond work 'the point of light,' in Faisal's work, 'the point of light.' So I think that's the same as what they call in the highest level of Buddhist tantra

'individual clear light consciousness.' And in ordinary terms we would call that our 'higher self.' And that part of us is always with us. You could also call it the Beloved. But we're not aware of it. It's like we're separate from that. You know, it's like saying we're never not one with God, but we don't realize that. Or we're never out of awakening, but we never realize that. So that part of our self, and it is inseparable from the absolute and it's inseparable with all awakened, you know, other awakened beings or whatever. That part of us knows what's happening. And knows that guidance for us, it *is* guiding us, but you know, we have to stay open to it. In Diamond Logos work when we really open to the point of light, which is a whole, you know, there's all these issues. And we won't even get into that in our [Diamond Logos] group until probably like three years from now or four years from now. Then you understand your life purpose without a shadow of a doubt. You know what your life purpose is, you know, and things like that. Also it's all of course a process. But, so that part of us knows all along what's happening. But we're like in the dark, sort of. So the more we can open to that...So it's personal, but it's transpersonal simultaneously because it's inseparable from the transpersonal. So it's individual but also beyond that. Because its wisdom is like cooked into...It's like having one computer, but it's networked to the whole system, [laughs] you know?

MS: Would you mind commenting on these awakened beings. What are the awakened beings?

D/B: Well, beings, humans or other beings, that have already awakened fully.

MS: So you're saying praying throughout the day, especially when we sit within the Vajrayana tradition, summoning, praying for guidance from these beings, these are, this is the transpersonal sphere...

D/B: Well, say like Buddha. Or a whole bunch of other people who've gotten awakened since Buddha. Or even from other traditions. It could be Jesus or Mohammed or you know, anybody.

MS: And how is that, in terms of investigating the field of reality, how is that communication happening? How is that frequency attuned to?

D/B: Well, that is a very individual thing, I think, like how that...OK, so there's transmission. But then there's also guidance, right. And then there could also be blessing. There could also be like removing obstacles, like awakened activity. So awakened activity can manifest in a variety of forms. And again, in terms of guidance, I really, I think the only thing we can do is really open and get our preference out of the way, really try to be objective. I mean, from

that too. Because, wherever we're talking about it's coming from, we could think it's coming from our higher Self or God or the universe. Or, you know, awakened beings we have close connection with, maybe karmically. Or *whatever*, it's all the same in terms of...I think we have to open and be objective.

MS: And in terms of the personal computer, in recognizing which transpersonal network is going to be the most efficacious, how do we first...I guess I'm interested in the essential energies and which vehicles are most karmically available to us, such as these different beings, right?

D/B: Yeah, like in Vajrayana with the different beings, it's really a personal intuition. Sometimes a teacher will say, like I will, when I consult with students like around their practice, I'll both use *my* intuition, my guidance. So what I'm seeing about them, and what I'm feeling about them, and the guidance that's coming to me through my seeing and understanding, it's spontaneous what comes. And then I consult with them what they're feeling. Because I personally feel in the way the Tibetan work is, that it really depends a lot on what the student is drawn to. That's like really, really important. So you know, once in a great while a teacher will say you have to do this practice. They'll just see that it's something really strong and they'll tell somebody. But that's very rare. And then it won't usually be their whole life. I mean, they'll do other things as well. But usually it's where we're drawn to, you know. So I get that information from like, well what do they feel drawn to, you know, that kind of thing.

MS: Yeah, I'm very curious about that. There's a dialogic process between the unawakened and the awakened in terms of the ego preferences and also the non-ego preferences. And coming into an alignment with a teacher who's many steps ahead in terms of guiding us through our awakening process. Have you ever had experiences in which your inner guidance and your teacher's external authority, one that you take to be, like with [name] Rinpoche, an awakened mind, to be in disagreement? And if so, what do you do with that negotiation?

D/B: Oh, I had a super powerful thing happen with that. The only time I ever had that was super, super powerful. But I knew it was my ego. But I was up against all my conditioning. And it was when I was in three-year retreat the last year and my brother died suddenly, and he was like 27 years old. And of course my family was freaked out and they were here in Marin and stuff and my son was staying with my mom, and my brother was like the closest male to him. I have two brothers, one is still alive. But anyway, this other one was very close with him. So, it was this big tragedy, and then they telegrammed me and they wanted me to come, of course. And I

was in the last year of three-year retreat. Well, when you go in those kinds of retreats you don't really plan to come out just because there's some kind of crisis. [laughs] So, but, you know, I was so in the grip of the whole thing that I asked my Lama there to contact [name] Rinpoche and see if I could leave retreat. You know, because I was just in the throes of this huge shock and grief and everything. And so it turned out that [name] Rinpoche was in France and so he was able to call them and talk to them on the phone. And we were in this retreat center, we had no electricity, no phone, nothing. So you know, it was a whole deal, you had to go to town, you know, all this stuff, it's not like nowadays, although nowadays I still don't know if they have it up there. But anyway, so, he had this big long talk with [name] Rinpoche and he came back into my room, this Lama, and he said, "Well..." He said it was like a cold front coming in [laughs] or something like that, and he was like, "Rinpoche said [name] can do whatever she likes, but she agreed to be here for three years." That was it. So it was like, he and I were both like, "Oh my God," you know, because it was like, such a powerful thing from my conditioning of my responsibility to my son that, and my whole family, that it was so strong so, that was like, it was clear what Rinpoche was saying. And yet I had this huge psychological feeling of responsibility to leave. And so at that point that was like, in terms of that, a really, really powerful point for me. And it felt like all my conditioning was screaming at me to let go and be with my family. And on the other hand I felt like Rinpoche was... You see, when you go into three-year retreat it's like you kind of agree, you know, it's not made explicit, but basically you're agreeing to deal with everything from an absolute point of view, from an absolute truth point of view. And so Rinpoche was holding out the absolute. And so it was like I was on a cliff and was I going to stay with my conditioning or jump off the cliff into the void? Or whatever, you know, just like into whatever. But I knew Rinpoche was in the void. Like I knew he was in the absolute. So in a sense it was like jumping off this cliff, which was psychologically extremely stressful. But I also totally had this unshakable trust in him. So, I did. And it was so powerful my body actually went into paralysis for like five hours after that, you know. And my girlfriend just sort of...

MS: After the decision?

D/B: Yeah, after the decision. And this feeling of just like jumping off the cliff. A day, I don't know if it was that day, no it was definitely at least the next day or something, my body, yeah, just totally went into a paralysis where you can't move. And then eventually it passed, you know, so, it was huge for me to completely go against my conditioning like that. And I'm saying my conditioning, because it's very cultural, you know. Of course, my deepest sense of responsibility in my life at that point was to my son. That was

like what I felt was my deepest duty in a sense. But, at the same time, I understood that if we're really going to have realization spiritually it's beyond these kinds of things. You know, worldly duties or, you know, that kind of thing. Or, family even, you know. And so in a sense that's why it's like jumping off a cliff. So at that point it wasn't, I knew it was my ego that was fighting. I, it wasn't a question in terms of, I've never had an experience with a teacher, I've been really, really fortunate with teachers. Really, really fortunate. I've had really high level teachers. And I've never had a disagreement with any of them.

MS: OK, so your inner guidance, the nonegoic guidance, has never been in conflict with an external nonegoic guidance.

D/B: Right. But I think that that can happen.

MS: What would your conjecture be if it did?

D/B: Well, I think it's happened with a lot of teachers that aren't really enlightened. And so the student starts getting guidance like, and the teacher's saying, "No, you've got to do this." But it's really coming out of the teacher's ego.

MS: I understand. So your assumption is that there will never be a conflict between nonegoic and nonegoic...

D/B: Well, I think there could be, because I think those two people, even if it was both nonegoic, might not have all the information.

MS: How would you resolve that if that were the case?

D/B: Well, I think sharing information.

MS: OK, the dialogic process again.

D/B: Dialogue, openness. You know, like, conversation. Because I think if there really are two people in a nonegoic place, opening to what is right, if you review all the information you're going to come to some harmonious decision.

MS: So if there's enough information there, there's never a contradiction, because the absolute is never in conflict with itself.

D/B: I think it's lack of information. And cultural dissonance is lack of information. You know, because if you're coming from a different cultural point of view you don't have the same information. To get the same information you've got to open to receive a different kind of information maybe than you're used to receiving. And some people can't do that. You know, they can't get beyond their own

cultural stuff. Whether it's an Asian or middle eastern or western or whatever. You know, some people just can't see outside their own box. So if the people are like that you're going to stay with the conflict, you know. But I think that with authentic spiritual teachers, you know, they're, for one thing, I really believe this and this is very much the way the high Tibetans operate, it's much more about the student's guidance. Like the path is to...Now [name] Rinpoche said to us, "The reason you should do three-year retreat is so you can be your own Lama." That means have your own guidance, be your own teacher. It's supposed to be that the teacher gets revealed from within. So I have a mistrust of spiritual teachers that don't have that kind of, you know, don't see themselves as facilitating the development of the student's own guidance and wisdom. Because I think it's kind of a power trip, you know, which is kind of an ego trip. You know, for whatever, wherever their ego's invested. [laughs]

MS: Do you find that your current relationship with inner guidance is still developing and evolving?

D/B: Yeah. Yeah.

MS: Will you comment on that at all?

D/B: I think it's developing in that it's, in terms of doing inner work on myself, the more I do it the more I see and the more I learn. And I learn more about the process. And the more I do with students in terms of facilitating anything with them, you know, I learn. But it's such a nonlinear process, it's such a non-rational...I mean, I've really found that it's all extremely rational, but it doesn't come necessarily in a rational way. You know what I mean? It doesn't come through, I don't know, I think it just requires a lot of openness. I was going to say it doesn't come through figuring it out, but sometimes it does. Sometimes you just think, "Why is this happening?" And you just kind of like, you know, you think about it and somehow the pieces fit together, you know. But then there's, you know, that phenomena that they always talk about like with the scientists where the whole problem will come in a dream. Or they'll be on the toilet or something [laughs] and bam!

MS: The egg just cracks open and it's all there.

D/B: Yeah.

MS: Yeah. I was also just thinking of Newton and how he used to keep problems in his mind for weeks at a time, and then suddenly the solution would come as if ready-made. Kind of like luck favors the well-prepared.

D/B: I think it's the same thing about if we're wanting some guidance. If we really keep opening, keep it there, you know, it will come. But I think, you know, we have to stick with it and not get in the way of it.

MS: Does the strength or presence of your inner guidance vary over time? And it seems connected, in terms of just sustaining the receptivity and openness, which *itself* seems like a guidance. The sheer intention to keep the door ajar.

D/B: Right. And sometimes I think we're just more in a fog. I mean, we go through periods in our life where, you know, we're just more in a fog. You know, we're for whatever reason, we're like...

MS: What do you do when you're there? Do you wait it out? Do you step up or amp up the supplication?

D/B: I think the further we go on the journey that kind of fogginess dissipates over time. You know, unless you're getting up against some sort layer that's really shut down or numb or foggy or something and you kind of go through a layer like that. But, even with that I think the clarity...My own experience is that the clarity of awareness intensifies or clarifies over time. It's like a little flame becomes a brighter flame, so the clarity of awareness develops.

MS: It's almost as if fogginess is the default state to start with, and then clarity becomes the default state with clouds being the exception.

D/B: Exactly, exactly.

MS: Do you find your experience with inner guidance has been consistent with these traditions? In terms of how they're written about and how they've been presented to you externally?

D/B: Yeah, that's really interesting. I think that's one thing that's led me to trust the seeing, is that there's been a lot of correlation. You know, like I've had correlation, not often, but in one very strong case I had a lot of inner seeing and guidance of doing some really deep work. And I ran it by one of the really high Rinpoches and he completely confirmed it. And it was all stuff that came out of my Diamond Logos work, so it was a whole different domain. I came across this very differently, and he just said, "Yeah, you completely understand, you got the whole thing." So that was a really big confirmation, because it had come in a totally different way and through my own processing work. And other experiences I've had have been, you know, in texts or in, you know, other, you know...So I think the more you go onto the spiritual path, when you read memoirs of other people or things they've said, and you

read texts, you start to find a lot of correlation. It starts to happen a lot.

MS: And when there's disconfirmation, when there's non-correlation? How do you navigate that?

D/B: I don't really find that happens. It just, I don't find it happens, yeah. Yeah, it's funny. You know there's, you've probably heard of Naropa, and his teacher was Tilopa. And we have this famous song of realization from Tilopa, and he said, what is it? I can't remember the quote exactly, but something about 'When this inner luminosity or inner awareness opens or understanding, you will understand everything written in the ancient scriptures.' And that's my experience. It's like the more you understand or have realization, any religion you understand what they're talking about.

MS: It's like holographic, the piece becomes a microcosm of the whole...

D/B: Yeah, isn't that interesting? Yeah, I never really thought too much about it, but it's an interesting process, to investigate into that. A spiritual friend, who is a Chinese Taoist master, he also said that he read the Bible and other texts and he would just feel like he completely understood what was there. I think a lot of people have that experience. Ramakrishna went and studied in different traditions and felt like he totally imbibed their tradition and then went on. But he wanted to know about it. And just in a matter of a few days or a week or two he would immerse himself and totally get it. So I think there's something...It's sort of like when the key is unlocking the door it starts unlocking all the doors.

MS: Like a skeleton key.

D/B: Yeah, right.

MS: How might you use inner guidance in terms of choosing how to prioritize spiritual practices? Or in terms of determining for yourself when the traditions are ripe for your exploration? And even in terms of the Vajrayana and the Diamond Logos, how did you chose these two? I'm assuming that in your three year-old dream, the second uncle was [name] Rinpoche?

D/B: No, I don't know who he was. They were both Arabs. I sometimes thought it was [name]. I'm not sure. I don't know. But between the Diamond Heart and the Vajrayana, a lot of us who have done a lot of work, whether with Hamid or Faisal. And among Buddhist practitioners, this is the question that is talked about a lot. When do you want to use inquiry and when do you let it, what we call, self-liberate?

MS: Do you mind if I just pause for a minute to unpack that? So inquiry is more of a deliberate process and self-liberate involves greater receptivity?

D/B: Self-liberate is completely different. There's no inquiry. It's a direct seeing of the true nature of the phenomenon instead of inquiring in to the relative phenomena. You just see its true nature on the absolute level and that self-liberates.

MS: And certain are more effective at different times?

D/B: Well, that's how it seems. Because if we fully could see its true nature, totally completely...It's hard to talk about. Because in a sense, it's not as if I'm *not* seeing its true nature, but the power somehow, the fullness of that experience...Like it's said, if you completely enter into that fully, you don't have anymore karma, at all. So I think for somebody on the path of integrating that realization, which is where I consider myself to be, it's tricky. Because to turn that awareness in the moment to, say, a habitual pattern, you know the ego's slippery. It will try to slip away when it has really strong habitual psychological patterns. So, basically, if there's really strong habitual psychological patterns, they will kind of evade being seen in that way.

MS: They'll even evade that pure magnifying being of pure awareness?

D/B: They will evade the pure awareness being seen, yeah, in a certain sense. That's part of the ego. Like it'll hide from that or something.

MS: So the relative does better with the scouting work at the margins of...

D/B: Yeah, the ego feels like it's going to lose something a lot in spiritual development.

MS: And inquiry can ferret out those ego domains more effectively?

D/B: Yeah. So there might be a reason to inquire. For example, if there's a pattern, mainly. It's like if there's a pattern that keeps repeating. So in whatever level the spiritual practice is at of a different person, it's not really getting to it. So if it keeps coming up, or if there's some reason that it feels like there's interesting information in there. Or the ego really doesn't want to be seen directly, or we're too identified with the ego to look at in a nonegoic perspective. That's really basically what it is, I think. Which then doesn't actually allow the clarity of the awareness to look at it because we're more identified at that point with the ego, and the ego doesn't want to be looked at. So then, to investigate inquiry is really helpful. Because then you can understand how the ego's feeling.

And that's sort of what we've come to. But then, I think that that's a path perspective. Because say, for example, if you take somebody like [name] Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama, Karmapa, Dilgo Khyentse. You know, these kind of people, I don't think they have to inquire into anything. You know, now the inquiry itself, for myself I started doing that in three-year retreat. So basically, I just figured out how to do inquiry by myself in three-year retreat in order to work with my psychological issues that were coming up... And then when I met [Diamond Logos instructor] and started doing it, it was like, well, this is what I've been doing. But it's very helpful to have somebody to do it with. It just makes a big difference.

MS: And I interrupted you before, and you might have just covered this in what you were just saying. But in terms of choosing how to prioritize, in the relative path perspective of time and place, certain practices, when they're timely for you, are you making use of inner guidance or are you relying upon external teachers for that?

D/B: I usually pretty much use my own inner feeling about, my own intuition or feeling about it. I mean, recently this year, actually, I was doing some retreat in Bhutan in January and I did consult with one of my teachers because I was lucky to see him in Bodhgaya. And he actually kind of pushed me way beyond. He basically set me free in a bigger domain. In other words, he was more empowering to me than I would have been to myself. Which was interesting. [laughs] I don't tend to, again, with the high teachers I've had experience with, they don't tend to be into telling you what to do.

MS: So this seems connected with the inquiry process, where it's more effective with somebody else, in that relational space.

D/B: But it's still a personal process, even though someone else is with you or something. Unless you're both jointly doing inquiry, but that's a whole different subject. But I've done that, which is very fascinating. It's not just individual, you're both doing it together.

MS: So connecting this with the Vajrayana, you described yourself on the path of integrating the realized perspective, of which you've had experience, but trying to stabilize that.

D/B: Right, that's right. And with my own psychological patterns and everything.

MS: And at times, even given that you've had this taste of the pure awareness, which you recognize and can rely upon, sometimes it still helps to have the external teacher to blast you into a new domain of freedom.

D/B: Yeah, yeah.

MS: What's happening there?

D/B: I think because somebody like, let's say this teacher that I talked to earlier this year. He's very deeply realized. So I really think that realization is like a spec-, it's like a developmental thing. And it doesn't mean that I'm not resting in pure being, or that I'm not resting in pure awareness. But it's really like a little flame compared to a forest fire or something. That's how I see it. It's hard to put into words, because conceptually it's not really true saying that. But it is true. Do you know what I mean?

MS: So it's the same essence but a different magnification.

D/B: That's how I feel it and...

MS: The concentration of it.

D/B: Yeah. And the actualization of it. The full integration of it throughout the entire psyche. So that the clarity of that is so much more because all the psychological issues are gone. And on the way we're moving through our psychological issues, releasing those. But it's not the same as somebody who's already past all that.

MS: Is there a level or developmental aspect of realization that *is* ultimate?

D/B: I think so. Well, they say in Buddhism...Like the Buddha, there's levels. They have like ten bhumis, and the eleventh bhumi is Buddha. There's a lot of ways you can talk about it developmentally in Buddhism. There's a lot of different schemes for the developmental.

MS: And does the Diamond Logos have a similar understanding?

D/B: Oh, it's a completely different language. And I don't know if they're really, they haven't talked about full awakening or full enlightenment that much that I've heard. That's an interesting thing. They talk really about working through our issues to actualize our qualities of pure Being and actualize ourselves in pure Being, in that sense. But not so much, they don't use the language so much of...

MS: It's not a destination language so much as a process one?

D/B: Yeah, I think that's an interesting thing. I think it would be interesting to interview Hamid and Faisal each individually about

that, about their perspectives on that. I'm not quite sure what they'd think about all that.

MS: How did you choose Vajrayana? I understand through [name] Rinpoche...

D/B: Yeah, because I wasn't a Buddhist or anything, it was just, bam! [claps hands] I thought, "Well whatever he is, I guess [laughs] that'll be fine for me!"

MS [laughs] I'll have what he's having!

D/B: Yeah.

MS: And the same thing with [Diamond Logos instructor]...

D/B: Well, it was the same thing. OK, so for me relationship is very important. That's how things come to me. It's interesting, but all these things kind of came to me through relationship. Like a friend of mine called me and said, "Oh I'm working with this guy [Diamond Logos instructor], and you've got to call him. You'll really like him." And I wasn't trying to work with anybody. I just called him on the phone and immediately really liked him and felt a good connection with him. I thought, "OK, I'll start seeing him." Just like that! [laughs] No particular, any reason or anything.

MS: And in the mystical Christian tradition...

D/B: Well, that I was born into.

MS: But there was never a relational component that took you deeper into that tradition?

D/B: No. I think maybe there's more like karmic stuff for me with Christianity and having good childhood experiences. You know, I have a lot of positive karma with Christianity from past lives.

MS: [laughs] That's pretty rare!

D/B: It *is* rare. I was a practitioner, I think I was a nun. I mean, I think I achieved a lot of realization during some of those lives. I always think of it in spite of... You know, some people develop in spite of the Church. [laughs] I mean, you know, the Church holds it to some extent, but they also screw it up.

MS: Moving into the present, do you feel like you're in a place right now in your life, or is there anything going on for you right now, where you're trying to make any decisions and this inner guidance process is very pertinent?

D/B: Yeah, it is actually. I'm doing a piece of inner work where I'm really working with that right now. It's funny also, because in this particular piece things that happened outside were kind of like, why's that happening? You know, things would just kind of come up in conversation. Nothing to do with me, they would just kind of pop up and it's relevant. So after that started happening, and then...I am quite interactive, you know. Certain things people say, or I'll be in conversation with them and pieces will start coming together that way. And it's like doing inner research. Researching in myself and doing more inquiry kind of work.

MS: And in so far as what external pieces seem to be relevant, that's just a question of paying attention to what's fitting into the larger theme?

D/B: Well they just seem to pop up. Like pop up, really obvious.

MS: Like a randomness to it?

D/B: Yeah. Say if somebody says something to me directly. Say it's like somebody I choose to work with in my own work. I generally trust, you know. I think I'm a really trusting person, though that has really worked well for me. Like also, I was too naïve when I was younger, but basically I've been very lucky, I think. I think I have a lot of spiritual protection and good karma that way, so it's like I *can* be trusting. But I don't think it's luck so much as, I think I have good connections from past lives and stuff. But also, I do tend to really give people the benefit of the doubt, you know. Like, say if it's somebody I'm working with. Like, for example, [Diamond Logos instructor]. I completely trusted him. I never had an experience where I felt he was off from me. And it's not like I haven't seen him be off in certain situations. But never anything with me. And I just totally opened to whatever he had to say. I don't really advocate that, because a lot of people have bad karma with teachers. So they really need to be discerning. And it's like people really need to discern very carefully. I mean, I think discernment is a huge thing that we really need to develop in the west, spiritually. I mean, it's like in India they have a lot more spiritual discernment than we do. We're just likely completely idiots, you know? I mean, we believe PR more than authentic. We can't tell the difference. Westerners can't tell the difference between PR and spirituality. They really can't.

MS: We have no inner barometer for that?

D/B: I think that's it. There's no kind of inner barometer. And if it sounds good and it's powerful, people go for it. So I think it's something we really need to keep on developing here. And

teachers need to help students develop discernment rather than shut down students' discernment. But that requires also being open yourself and not being invested in your own ego and stuff, as a teacher. Because otherwise, if you want to somehow have a lot of students or get money from them or get sex or whatever you want, then [laughs] you have to be fulfilling your agenda, you know.

MS: Can you give an example of what might be an imminent decision you're facing in which inner guidance is useful?

D/B: Oh, I don't really have any decisions, I'm just doing some inner work right now.

MS: What do you mean by "inner work," if you feel comfortable sharing that process?

D/B: I guess I've found that it's very important to trust the process. It's like what I was saying before, of what's being revealed to you. And that's what I've found, to really trust the process. And we can hold skeptical, for example, if I have an experience that feels like a past life or something, you know, I can hold skepticism. Like whether or not it's a past life or whether it's metaphorical or whatever. Or if I see something happen, was it that person or was I watching or is it just a metaphor, you know? It doesn't really matter in terms of the inner work piece that's happening. So in that sense I think it's good to have an open sort of skepticism. But still to follow through, OK. Like, where is that taking me? You know, I'm being shown this imagery, this feeling is arising, and then this feeling is arising or this image is arising. It's like, to stay with that process. So, and to keep following the thread of it. That's what seems to me, it reveals itself. But again, like if the rational mind comes in and says, actually in this piece I was doing, that I've been working on recently, I did think, "Oh, this isn't possible because that wouldn't have happened in that century." And the next day I opened a book and it was happening in that century. I was like, "OK, OK. I guess it was happening in that century." You know, it's just really weird, because like I've said, I've had so much stuff outwardly correlated with inner experience. And then like reading in history or certain things. And so I've really gotten to trust a lot of my own inner seeing, because there has been a lot of correlations. And because I don't have any ego attachment to it. I really don't. So it's like, there's no reason I should care one way or the other.

MS: I keep thinking that chance comes to the well-prepared. That karmically, as far as luck is concerned, one earns the right to be able to trust. Because in a sense, the more that trust has been earned, the less it's serendipitous.

D/B: I think it's true. And I think it's with ourselves we have to earn the trust. It's always ourselves, ultimately, that betrays ourselves. Even if it looks like somebody else is doing it. Really, when it boils down to the final analysis, it's an internal process. So I think you're right. I think it is an internal coming to trust. Because basically the way I look at it, we set up people to do things in our lives. You know, they're playing out our karma. I mean, it doesn't make people not responsible individually for their own actions, but ultimately we're responsible. So sometimes I'll do *mo*'s too, if I have to make a decision.

MS: A divination.

D/B: Yeah, I'll do a divination about it. I don't always completely trust it because it's not, it doesn't feel as sure.

MS: When would you feel called upon to use that external form of guidance, such as divination? If it's coming from the same field that the true guidance emerges from...

D/B: Yeah, well, upon little stupid things. Little things like, last year when we were going to go to Bodhgaya this winter, I needed to make a decision as to whether I was going to book this hotel room one way or another way. But when you get to India, it makes a big difference [laughs] what hotel room you get. So it was one of those little stupid things. And because when they do these huge things in Bodhgaya where they take over the whole town, it's not going to be possible to change our hotel room later, right. So it was one of these little things, but I really didn't know. It was concerned with two different Lamas. And I actually had an intuition of which way to go, but it was actually different than I would have thought in a certain sense. So anyways, that was an example about where, I mean, it's just a stupid little thing. And it's really funny because the *mo* turned out really different than you would have thought, but it actually turned out true. When we got there we actually got this fantastic room. And if we had gone to the other hotel it would have turned out terrible where they were staying.

MS: This little thing seems so crucial to me of like, you or the *mo*. Whether it's a little thing, something in you realized that this external tool, which is tapping into that same field of truth that you would tune into through your own inner process, that somehow *that* was the best tool to be used for this specific circumstance. How does that, how did that come to mind? The *mo* is almost embodying, in a technical form, or in a strategic form, this external guidance piece: the nonegoic external versus the internal. When do you choose the *mo*?

D/B: And I really pray before I do it, to guidance. But like I said, I usually do it with worldly stuff. It's really funny, because the Tibetan really high Rinpoches will do *mo*. They'll all do *mo* if you ask them. Sometimes they do them for themselves. But they don't really have to do *mos*. They could just look. But at a certain point it almost becomes sort of a, you kind of ask them something and you know that, it's sort of like their way of pretending they can't see.

MS: Out of humility...

D/B: Right, it's really funny sometimes like that [laughs.]

MS: Did you feel that at any point in this interview you've drawn upon some form of inner guidance, or that you've drawn upon that source, in responding to my questions? Or made use of a certain strategy.

D/B: Yeah, I think I was trying to look in and see, you know.

MS: And what was that like, if you were to try to describe the experience?

D/B: I think it's an experience of looking into the unknown and being open to the unknown.

MS: And did the information come as a visual, as a voice, as words...

D/B: Thoughts, yeah. Thoughts or words.

MS: So peering inside of the unknown, a thought will spontaneously arise and then that will just come out as a word.

D/B: Mm-mmm.

MS: Could I invite you right now to answer my question of what is inner guidance while drawing upon the process that you just described?

D/B: OK, OK... You know, what's coming is just that it's the luminous clarity of awareness itself. So opening to that, it's like the light is shining, the clarity and the light are shining. That's what in our tradition, the Mahamudra, it's said that the nature of our being is, in Dzogchen they say it's awareness-emptiness, in Mahamudra they say it's luminosity-clarity-emptiness. They're both interchangeable. So awareness itself has, is, I mean, embodies the nature of everything. So again, if we're more identified with the ego, then it's kind of clouding over that clarity of awareness that will then have the guidance because it knows and sees so much

more that the ego does. The ego sees such a limited piece of everything.

MS: Thank you.

D/B: It was fun talking about this.

Interview with Diamond Logos Practitioner [D]

MS: My general question is, "What has been your lived experience of inner guidance? And how does it make sense within your understanding of the Diamond Logos teachings? That's my general interest. And my first specific question would be, how did you initially come to locate or identify this source or this process of inner guidance in your life?"

D: When I started this journey, trying to find answers for the dilemmas of my life, you know, I was going through a lot of intensities and difficult times and not knowing how to navigate. So at times a deep lostness and nowhere to find an answer. There was nothing but to pray. To pray for some guidance, some understanding of what's happening. How to deal with the immensity of lostness or the personal hurts and pains. Being young and not knowing where to navigate, where to go. So in those moments of deep despair, within the depths of those darkneses of the soul, praying for some connections, some guidance. And in the beginning, guidance would manifest as something that's close to me that I can relate to, something for me. And that's part of the grace of guidance, part of the compassion and the love of the guidance, is that it will manifest to the individual in a way that is close to their heart, close to their nature. So they can relate to it. So it manifested as elders that were in my childhood that I felt loved by, cared by, you know. There was a saint in the neighborhood, so in terms of lostness sometimes I see his image or his picture comforting me or taking my, you know, hand, the inner life, to cry a little bit, to feel assured a little bit. My grandfather was also one of those. So in the beginning the awareness came like that, in a personal way. And later on it started evolving more and more. It was more, um...more visionary. That were, not exactly, for me, that were maybe a wise old man, like Jungian psychology, or um, might come as one of the high beings or high saints in my background. Or when I get into Buddhism I would see deities that are Buddhist, coming to me in visions, and I received grace and I received love. And I don't receive guidance in a way that was telling me, "This is right and this is wrong." It was guidance in terms of transforming me in the field level and a mind level, taking me to another state in which I could understand whatever was happening. Because in the state of confusion and the state of lostness and the state of pain, I was not really able to decipher what the guidance would tell me. So the guidance would take my hand or my assemblage point from one domain and put me in another domain. Then I feel relieved, I feel at peace, then I begin to understand what's going on. So it started to manifest as higher desires, as higher beings. Then...is that OK?

MS: Yes, it's wonderful, thank you.

D: Then, it started, I, personally I love inner seeing. I am addicted to seeing, I love to see. Instead of watching so much TV, I love to close my eyes and see the visionary realms: images, visions, states of being. And the guidance was holding my hand as I moved through the different depths and different gradations of seeing. And each time I go deeper, the guidance shifts in manifestation, from grandpa to saint to high being to deity. And to, then by that time it started to manifest in a grander way, in a much more grander way than a vision or entity. It started manifesting as a living being. And the most thrilling of all those living beings was the angel Gabriel. Was that breathtaking vision of this angel, whose feet were in the ground, whose head was above the spheres of heaven, and wings of magnificent light. So it wasn't a picture, it was seeing. I could see and feel the frequency and the light and the blessings and the love and the dark, the knowing coming from the angel itself, angel Gabriel. Then as my seeing gets even more, as I get more stabilized in my inner journey, deepened in my spiritual journey, the vision of the angel also started to dissipate and manifested where it was emanating from. What is the source of this vision, you know? It wasn't an image. It was an actual jeweled entity. A being made of utmost precious elements of being. Gold and pearls and diamonds, sitting in a lotus. It was a vision of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddhists spoke about. Or the Sufis talk about their Imam, or very high being, made of those utmost jewels. And it wasn't different from my very identity, my own identity. It was the emanation of my higher self. As if I had my own inner guidance. And that you have similar guidance. And that's when I started to call it the "Diamond Body." It's a body like our body, like our human body, but made of diamonds. Made of jewels. And I took the name from the Taoists. The Taoists believe that you have to cultivate the chi energy that you are born in, evolve it, cultivate it, preserve it 'til it gels, 'til your consciousness becomes so concrete, so solid, it gels into Diamond. And if you gel your consciousness on that level, you have created your inner guide, who's the energy of the cosmic guide. And you will sustain for yourself, create for yourself, the body of immortality. So instead of us at the moment dying, we dissolve and dissipate in the energy of the cosmic field, you maintain an entity there. As a conscious entity of who you are. And this conscious entity will reincarnate or will go to other realms. So they were aiming in the Taoists to cultivate the Diamond entity, the Diamond Body. So when I saw this vision of the Diamond Body, I realized that that is what they are referring to, that is what they are talking to. And this Diamond Body, when I tried to go beyond it, there were no other presentations. It was the ultimate and final representation on the relative realm. It was the pinnacle of consciousness. Then when I go beyond it, I go beyond consciousness. I go to awareness. Awareness is different from

consciousness. Then you go to the cosmic field, to the absolute, to Godhood. And there is the ultimate ocean, there is no more guidance. You don't need to be guided there because you arrived. So the guidance is the last stage, it's pure consciousness, that ultimately unites you with pure consciousness. And pure awareness. I differentiate between consciousness and awareness. Consciousness is little less frequency than pure awareness. Consciousness enables you to differentiate, to know, to evolve, to grow, while pure awareness disengages you and makes you, um, totally differentiated from the relative, even the blessed relative, even the essential domain. And that to me is pure awareness. And there is the higher consciousness, which is what you call the Diamond Body. And then there is the relative consciousness, which is our daily consciousness, which most of the time is weak and meek and gets caught here and there and trapped here and there. While the Diamond consciousness is impeccably free of attachment, it doesn't get caught in any domain, it can always perceive the truth and the reality of each domain. And to me that was the Diamond consciousness. And from that consciousness I realized that the Diamond Approach, you know, which I started with [name], came from this aspect of our being. Hence the Diamond Body. And the Diamond Body brought in our blessings, his in his way and mine in my way. And through the union and the friendship and the cooperation we formulated the Diamond Approach. And then we reached a limit, the friendship was not moving, working the way I needed or he needed. Then I had to go my own way and my Diamond Body continued to evolve the paradigm, in my view, of the Diamond Approach and turned it into the Diamond Logos. It shifted, the whole concept shifted, the entrance, so it brought a new paradigm, a new logos, a new articulation. But by that time my connection to the Diamond Body became sight connection. While in the beginning stages it was visionary or it was seeing a shamanic journey or a vision or a dream or a whisper or I hear a song and I get to the meaning, it was mystical, it was mysterious. But by now it is almost concrete. If I'm not sure, I check, is the Diamond Body here? And if I feel the presence is concrete, concrete, clear, precise consciousness, I know the guidance is there. If it's not there, I check again and again. Is this my wishful thinking? Is this my own manipulation, trying to think a certain way? Or is this the truth coming through the Angel Gabriel? So the Diamond Body was the angel Gabriel, the angel of revelation. It brought revelations to prophets, but to us it brought revelation within the psychospiritual domain, you know? It's like that karmic lineage, it's the same entity that brought all of these things. And then found out that each one has, in its own little Diamond Body, which is immense, the depth of the inner journey and the unconscious. But also the universe, one layer of the universe, is designed as a Diamond consciousness. So then it's the cosmic guide, the cosmic guru. And that cosmic consciousness

differentiates the field of the absolute into different realities for different times, different spaces. And that's the cosmic guide or the grand archangel, Gabriel. So we are in the image of the cosmos and the cosmos in our image. We all have our own Diamond consciousness or our own inner guide.

MS: Is this cosmic guru operating in the realm of pure awareness?

D: Pure awareness and the relative. It's between the relative and the absolute. It differentiates. If you think pure awareness is like white light, you know, it's not quite light or white light, but let's say that it's white light. And you put a prism in it and it becomes a rainbow. So the absolute is a pure, luminous, clear presence. And we put the Diamond Body in it, it differentiates that into articulation, into manifestation, into myriads of realms of reality. But it articulated through the principle of knowing and understanding. There are other aspects of being that take this differentiation and articulate it maybe in physical and into energetic and all of those things. So there are lenses or there are systems or essential structures in which the absolute moves through and gets differentiated into different realities. So white light through a prism becomes a rainbow, then the rainbow light gels into more and becomes more liquid light and then the liquid light gels more and becomes solid light and the solid light gels more and becomes physical reality. It's all one. It's like you have water, you steam it and it becomes steam and then it becomes vapor, then it becomes cloud, it becomes rain, it becomes ice, it becomes water. There is only one reality gelling in different forms. But in order for the absolute, the field, to gel in different forms, there are, there are needed lenses. And one lens is the principle of differentiation and integration, and that's the principle of guidance. What is guidance? It's a certain principle of the universe existing at the essential level as an actual substance that is experienced and perceived and seen as guidance. And if the person's capacity has not reached there, it is experienced as different gradations, different emanations. Maybe the person who sees just light will see the angel of light. And the people, the person who sees maybe just [glows?] and might see deities. And the people who sees just images might see saints. And the person who just has memories might see it as parents or grandparents. So the same guidance comes through the filters of our personality. The more we thin our personality the more we're transparent, the more the guidance creates us in its suchness. Which is an incredible structure of diamonds and entities in your image and my image made of diamonds and lights.

MS: Thank you. That's a very comprehensive question to my first question! [laughs]

D: [laughs] I thought you would like this total picture, huh? [laughs]

MS: [laughs] Very much so. I'm curious about, you said at this current stage of manifestation of the concrete guidance, you "check it."

D: Yes.

MS: Can you describe more what this checking process is like?

D: Well, I try to, the presence itself, the Diamond entity or the Diamond consciousness, has a certain effect, you know? And by those effects I can detect it. One effect is the presence of clarity, lucidity, precision, simplicity, openness, spaciousness, focus. So it has effects. When I feel that I feel I am open, I am present, I am clear, the answers become very simple and very deep and very profound. And since I am a seer, often I can see the deity in my head or in my heart or in my belly. Depending where it wants to manifest, where it wants to guide me. And that's more like cheating. I have this capacity, some people don't. [laughs] But the presence of this consciousness has a living presence to it, has a oneness, has a freshness, has a, you feel as if you have been in darkened clouds and suffering and the clouds parted and sunshine is there. While if it is coming from my ego or my personality, it is very amorphous, less energetic, less alive. It might excite me, or, but it's not, it's energetic excitement rather than a real depth and expansion. And often there's some kind of uncertainty about it, my mind. Confusion. My emotions, ambivalence. So the feeling of the personality, wishful thinking of guidance, is not crystal clear. Some doubts there. If guidance comes with the personality, then I have to see, is my personality affecting my guidance? Does it want to twist the arm of guidance to get what it wants, you know? So I keep staying with this, with the experience. Some confusion, some wishful thinking, some not knowing. And I stay with it and I keep sensing, feeling, praying, looking at what's stopping me from not seeing the situation clearly. The guidance is here, why do I not want to say, see it, or know it? Maybe because it might want to tell me things I don't want to know, I don't like. I want the answer to come this way, and it's telling me an answer I might not like. So I look at my prejudice, my preference, my bias. And little by little, the more I sort out my obscuration, then I see the guidance there holding my hand, helping me dissipate the clouds. And then the clouds of my personality dissipate, and through that dissipation there is a process of learning why those clouds are there. Why have they risen. Why are they blocking the guidance. And the guidance often [charges?] through them, telling you that maybe this obscuration is that the guidance lands in this area, in this depth, it will dissipate that created mother. I will lose my mother. Or I will lose my father. So I translate the obscuration to the object-relational field, into what happened to me in my childhood. And the guidance has helped me to see that what stands between me and

my liberation is nothing but my childhood issues. So it has simplified what is between me and my Being. It's not anymore a philosophical system or religious system, it's something really simple, you know? Suppose that the Diamond Guidance will come into my head and I cannot get it. There's something in my head clouding my head or covering my head and I don't know whether my thinking process is in guidance or off. Then as I stay with this obscuration, little by little the guidance will reveal to me that I am afraid of the clarity in my head because, if I come out from the unclear I might have confrontation with my father. My clarity, my precision, my intelligence will challenge my father. So I would rather be obscure, I would rather be confused, so I will not get the message of the guidance, not see the guidance, because psychologically it means that, you know, memory and threat of facing father. So once I see this fear and the fear begins to release, because there's no father anymore, there's nothing but me and my Being, then the fear goes away, and I can see the clarity of what's in my head and I understand the message in a simple way, in a clear way. So the guidance helps me not only to see the obscuration, but also to see the message. And not only to see the message, but also to see the stumbling blocks on the way.

MS: Do you sense the field will ever completely dissolve or dissipate? Meaning, will there ever be no clouds? Because it seems as if there's an evolution of having less and less of these obscurations.

D: Yes. Yes. Do I ever see that there will be *mahanirvana* in existence? First, it doesn't interest me. It used to. [laughs] When I was like spiritually young, a teenager, right, I wanted to go to *mahanirvana*. I wanted, I would never have, you know, obscurity. And that is interesting because it has to do with two aspects. One, I feel I am maturing more and more. And the more I mature the less I demand. I demand of myself less. I demand of reality less. I realize the complexity and the immensity of what is here. And I realize that as I am here, there's always something off, will happen, you know? There is a beautiful story about a high Sufi, two high Sufis. One named Hallaj, he's very famous. Who had a friend, also a great Sufi, called Chalabi. And Hallaj was famous to create rebellion in the Middle East and he was nailed to the cross and he dies as a martyr. And this man was very powerful, great, great saint. He went to visit Chalabi, his friend. His friend was sick. So Hallaj said to Chalabi, "What would you like?" Chalabi said, "I would like an apple from paradise." So Hallaj reached out, you know, and pulled an apple and brought it down. And there was a little piece rotten in it. And the student started laughing, you know. "How could an apple from a paradise have some rotten piece in it?" And Hallaj said, "It was pure, until it entered this realm. And then when it entered this realm there was contamination." The Dalai Lama is the Buddha of compassion, yet he suffered thirty years from anger,

which is anti-compassion. He was plagued with that. How could the Buddha, an emanation of the Buddha of pure compassion, have a failure like that? Could not maintain mahanimirvana of compassion? That to me indicates the vulnerability of the human, the grace of the human, the limitation of the human, and little by little I went over this um, obsession with mahanimirvana. I can go in my guidance and my guidance would clear so many things, and I end up in the absolute, pure awareness. Which is beautiful, which is wonderful, but this is not enough. To be the absolute is not enough. There is need for manifestation. Transcending manifestation is not enough. Entering manifestation, participating in manifestation, rolling up your sleeves, digging your hands in the soil, planting a tree and not complaining about the death and all of this hell, ultimately it will result in fruits. It doesn't happen in the realm of the absolute. In the realm of the absolute I can wish a tree and it will manifest as this beautiful tree in the absolute, and I will feel the bliss of it. But to bring it in the relative, in time and space, some labor is needed. So the more I mature the more I began to honor creation. Not the transcendence, that's the field. We create from the field and we dissolve in the field. But there is a miracle happening. The miraculous universe is emerging from the field into light, into creation, and it requires wisdom and patience and maturity and love and compassion, and this whole orchestra. So little by little the fascination with the complete transcendence is gone, you know, and contented with some transcendence within our name and some immanence. And I feel that's in my life more and more, yes. Before I was resenting of the relative. And I was unhappy with the relative. I wanted to shun the relative. And wanted the guidance always to take me to the absolute. And send me there and set me free forever and ever. And the more I entered the more I learned and the more I resolved my personal issues and healed so much of the pain caused by being in this relative, I began to see that the relative is the jewel of creation. This is the most precious thing there is. I discovered that the human being and this flesh is the pinnacle of creation. Because it is only in this flesh that my soul can experience the absolute, the great spirit, the individual spirit, the soul, the mental, the emotional, the physical, all come in one great symphony in this insignificant body. This body, the law has become the flesh. The Diamond Body in its evolution became the flesh. So to me it shifted the paradigm of thinking.

MS: And I'm wondering, what is this symphony in service of? Or to bring in the question of imminence, what is the guidance in service of?

D: Life, as far as I know. Life is the greatest gift there is. Being on the Enneagram, a 4, I resented that. I hated life. Life sucks, I want to go to the absolute, transcend life. And after years and years of working hard and breaking every barrier, including I damaged my

physical body without consciously knowing, my unconscious take risks my physical body, I caused my body injury. The drama and the trauma and the intensity of the 4 was so huge that I many times threw the baby with the bathwater, 'til I realized the absolute. And I enjoyed the absolute, I felt, OK, this is enlightenment, this is brilliant. But in time it didn't give me the answer, it wasn't enough. There was need for more. As if the guidance not only took me there, but took my hand back towards what's here and showed me the praises and the beauty and the sophistication. And the heart. And the magnificence of that, the gift of the great being, is life. And the pinnacle of life is the human being. It shifted my thinking 180 degrees, that the guidance is in service of the human to take him back to source and to take him to the magical kingdom. So the human being can integrate the relative with the absolute. There is nothing more glorious than the human being. Not even the absolute.

MS: So if I understand you, the purpose of guidance is to bring qualities of guidance into the imminent realm so as to better serve the evolution of life.

D: Of life.

MS: And the evolution of life is inherently and irreducibly valuable as the pinnacle of existence.

D: Exactly. One story we don't hear much about Buddha, we think of Buddha as transcendent and Buddha went to *mahanirvana* and vanished. Buddha still exists as an entity. He's not *mahanirvana*. Buddha field is different from Buddha. Buddhahood is different from Buddha. Buddhahood is not Buddha. And Buddha is not Buddhahood. Yeah. The Buddha is like the magnet. And Buddhahood is like the magnetic field. Inseparable. But you cannot emanate Buddha in *mahanirvana* and think there's only Buddhahood. The barrier between him and the infinite dissolves. So he's there as an entity experiencing the bliss of the infinite. This Buddha in his final stage of enlightenment and teaching, brought a beautiful story, it was a quiz. He said, "There was a man journeying in the mountains and he looked behind, he saw a tiger chasing him. And he ran away and saw a cherry tree and he climbed that tree and looking up he saw the tiger that was chasing him waiting, you know. And then he looked down, in the valley he saw another tiger waiting. And at the root of the cherry tree there were two mice, black and white, easting the root of the tree. What shall he do? What is solution? And of course, it was a huge riddle. Some say transcendence, this is the relative, this is phenomena, this is illusion, this is this, you know. Buddha said, you eat the cherries. What is left? The first tiger is birth. We were born. The second tiger is death. We're going to die. Day and night, black and white mouse

eating the tree. Time is eating our tree of life. What is there left except to enjoy the cherries?

MS: And I hear you saying there are a variety of ways for different subtle experiences of tasting that cherry. And those differentiations are important, meaning there are ways to experience the cherry at greater and greater sensitive levels.

D: Sensitive and richness and all kinds of levels, yes. Yes. You can eat the cherry as an animal does. With an animal soul. And that is so delicious, you know. It's like you are a really lustful being eating a cherry. Really into that richness of it. You can eat it as a very sophisticated human being, feeling the texture and all this. You can eat it as an essential emanation, you know, feeling that it's really rubies made of diamonds and the cherry's in that form. So you can get all the intricacies. Or somebody can eat it as a gross, you know, entity, like a hungry ghost eats but doesn't taste, does not feel, does not enjoy. So the whole, this gradation to that emanation here. And wherever the soul is, interacts with this reality according to its station, according to its level.

MS: So to bring guidance into this metaphor of experiencing the cherry, guidance will help us experience the cherry simultaneously on a multitude of levels so as to have a more evolved experience of that cherry? And that itself is the gift of life, to be able to experience...

D: The gradation of all of that.

MS: As the animal and as the essential being, and as the divine.

D: Yes.

MS: Simultaneously.

D: And it sometimes happens simultaneously when we are very lucid and very clear, you feel all of those things are happening. Then you feel you are really blessed as a human being. And this human being is from the alpha to the omega, from the animal to the divine, simultaneously. And each part is rich and beautiful. Or you can experience it from one domain or another, enjoy the richness of that domain. Eat the cherry from the belly center, then you feel like really rich animal soul. Eat it from the heart, you experience it as rich feelings and love and gratitude. Or from the head, as delight, as manifestation of such an exquisite, miraculous. So you can experience from one domain or another, depending on the evolution of the person. And depending what the person needs at the time, which the guidance will enable them. I can experience life from my belly center, then I'm about groundedness, about action, about efficiency, about stability, about all of those. Or I can

experience life from the heart, from the aspect of beauty and art and visions. I can experience it from the head, from the level of understanding and conceptualizing and seeing the intricacies. I can experience it from essence, as richnesses, as densities. Or I can experience it as a totality. It depends on how the person is evolved and also what is needed. Sometimes I don't need to experience life from the totality, I need to experience certain aspects of life, and the guidance will help me develop this certain aspect. Then it will take the symphony of having all the aspects come together.

MS: I see. So maybe I'm asking the same question again. But when you say what's needed, you say that the guidance will help us with what is needed to have a richer or freer experience of the full richness of what it is to be a human being, of reality.

D: Yes. Guidance, as far as I have seen and know, does not respond to what we want. It responds to what we need. Big difference.

MS: And once again, can you repeat what the need is. What might be a lack that we might, that the guidance might address?

D: For example, I am non-active, right, in the world. I have difficulty doing things in the world. I may be very brilliant in my head, I can intellectualize, conceptualize, I may be rich in my feelings, but I am impaired in my will, in my capacity to interact with the world. I feel afraid to go in the world, I feel I'm not going to have the energy, I feel I'm not going to have the stamina. I feel I am weak, then the guidance will come and land in my belly. And begin to reveal to me where my weaknesses are, where my distortions are, will help me find ways to strengthen my belly center. Maybe more meditation, maybe more yoga, maybe tai chi, maybe change my diet, maybe exercise, maybe it will take me to situations in which I will begin to see I'm afraid and it will show you what I'm afraid of. I'm really afraid of my projections in those situations. Or I'm afraid that I don't know. Then it will begin to teach me how to do this, how to do that. You know, how to do this, how to do that, I was never a mechanic, it will say, OK, go on and study this and look at this and then become a mechanic. So I get the know-how. I begin to take and know how to use the muscles and all of this, so it will guide me to awaken my belly center. That's what I needed. But if I am in my belly center and without the guidance, I feel what I want is more intellect. I wish I know more. So I go devour more books and I want to [lay?] and I want to have science fiction movies [laughs] and I want to check out and I don't want to move this [street?] and I hate those dogs and cats and you name it. That's what I want, the guidance will not give me what I want.

MS: Will you say more please about how to differentiate ego preference and conditioned, habituated craving, from the guidance itself?

Meaning, you are at a stage of recognizing, you've said, where you can check relatively quickly. For someone who is not so evolved in recognizing the flavor of guidance, how does one skillfully invite the guidance and maintain opening or receptivity to it, and discern this quality of what's needed from ego preference?

D: Yes. And always if we take the principle that guidance responds to need and not to want, then little by little I begin to tune up my mind to ask myself, to inquire, what do I need? Versus what do I want. What is my wishful thinking and what are the needs I really need in my life for my evolution? If I am going to school I need this. If I am working I need that. If I am in relationship I need that. Or I am beginning to question and decipher my needs versus my wants and wishes. And that's a lot, inquiry takes time. Because sometimes they seem to be so close, so confusing, then the more I come to know my needs, I come to hit my resistances, my deficiencies, my fears, then I know I am on the right track. [laughs] Because I am really seeing that I am escaping all the time. I'm on the run, right? [laughs] And the Diamond Guidance, or the guidance holding my hand, saying, "No, you go this way." And I say, "No, I want to go that way." So it's a process of inquiry of changing our paradigm, of challenging our comfort zone. And a process of also, a challenging process of developing trust. That maybe there's something in me knows better than what I think I know. Because as long as I am believing in my knowing and believing in my self and believing in my mind or emotions or physical sensations, I don't let Being, not knowing happen. So I need to venture into not knowing. And to trust that. If I'm going to the unknown then it will be revealed to me. So one of the qualities about guidance is developing trust, that I don't know and it's OK not to know. I need to stop myself from knowing, because as long as I am efforting to know, there is no room to receive the guidance. So I tolerate the disintegration and the fear of staying in the dark. Saying, "Yes, this is what I know, but maybe it's not enough." Because what I know has not solved my problem. Can I see what I know and slowly set it on the side and tolerate staying in the dark and say, "I don't know. What shall I do?" So that's where I disengage from my habitual tendencies, from my conditioning, and allow room for emptiness, for not knowing, and the guidance can shower me with knowing. As long as I am running on my habitual wheels of knowing and action, I will not meet the guidance, I interfere with the guidance. I will get it, but I will interfere with it. So that is a process of how to go about receiving the guidance. That the first important one is that I need to be more realistic about my need. Guidance as far as I know is more concrete than the physical concrete reality, so it is very real. And it's about the real, it's not about the wishful thinking, it's not about transcendence. It will take your hand to the absolute, say, "OK, this is the field, but now, go to the ground, you know. Make the fire. Grow something." Now you know the secret where it comes from,

but that's not enough. After you know, you do. After realization comes actualization. So the guidance takes you the full cycle. And it is preserving connection to the great being and life, the gift of the great being for us, which is this kingdom that is so rich and so magical. But now we're afraid to see it, we're living in the wishful thinking, and the guidance comes and pops those bubbles and breaks down those illusions. So the journey in the beginning is scary, you know. In the beginning, no. In the beginning it's tempting because you always get you some goodies and all of this. [laughs] But you go to the middle ground, it's so disappointing. You think now you are spiritual, you are on the right track, now you should be rewarded because you are really seeking God, and instead it's taking you to the dump ground. And you don't want to go there. So then the guidance becomes disappointing. Then the seeker turns against the guidance. Because it thinks the guidance was the friend in the beginning, now it's taking me to pain, lostness, confusions, history, memory banks, traumas. And the ego say, "You betrayed me! I wanted you to take me to the light. Why are you taking me there?" So there happens a struggle between the ego and the guidance. It does not trust the guidance, it pushes it away, it loses faith in it, and then the guidance again, again takes it to those unpleasant places. Because in those pains, in those wounds, in those confusions, in those unpleasant places, are the jewels that we are looking for with the imaginary, with the wishful thinking. It exists in the wound, within the very wound is the nectar of healing.

- MS:* So only by dwelling with conscious awareness in the darkness, which you call the wounds or the holes, right, or the resistance...that sheer act of dwelling with awareness, and the willingness to abide in that painful, resisted state, only then can jewels of truth be revealed.
- D:* Yes. And sometimes there is no willingness, but you stay anyway. [laughs] Because you realize, what's the choice, you know? What will happen is that then your ego does not like where they are taken, right, and resists and pushes away that guidance and then go back the old familiar way, and then get hit by the same disappointment, the same hurt, you see. It's relationships, right? Somebody goes and sees this gorgeous woman or this gorgeous man and they build this whole fantasy and they fall a little. The guidance says, "You go again and again into the same trap, you know. Look, that person is not exactly who you think they are. And they are not going to meet you the way you really need, look there." Then that person say, "No, I don't want that person, I wasn't this person." The guidance says, "Be my guest, go!"
- MS:* And the consequences of doing this are just postponing the inevitable awakening. Just putting off...

- D: Yes. Not just postponing the awakening, but avoiding the pain. Thinking that if I, you know, if I go this way, I will not have to face the pains and the hurts, you know, and will get the fulfillment. But if I go that way and face my own history, how I lost my being, how I lost my essence, the loneliness that happened, the hurt, the loss. So the ego is trying to avoid pain and go to pleasure and go to salvation. But the way it goes about it has not worked. The motivation is good, but it does not know how to go about it. So the Diamond Guidance will take the ego, which is like the inner child, the soul child, take its hands and say, "You know, my child, that's the way."
- MS: Well, I'm interested in this, because I hear you say, it's as if we keep drinking salt water to quench our thirst. And after a while we realize that this is not a helpful strategy. But you just said that on one level we can appeal to the guidance, if we're aware that the guidance has something beyond the level of ego satisfaction, and that is helpful to us.
- D: Yes.
- MS: We can through prayer, which you initially talked about, supplication. We can actually beseech the guidance to arrive and help us in our areas of lack or need. But if we are not aware of this capacity, does, do the qualities of guidance seek *us* out?
- D: All the time. All the time. We are not abandoned, not even one second, by guidance, see? In the intermediate stage, I was elaborating that in the intermediate stage the ego turns against the guidance, you know? In the beginning it feels, "Oh, the guidance is guiding me, sometimes taking me to pain, and I don't see it as a friend. So I push it away and don't trust it, and I see it as the enemy. And the guidance does not abandon, the guidance is there. Through the filters of my pain, through the filters of my resistance, through the filters of my confusion. It's still holding my hand, patiently waiting. If not a lifetime, 10,000 lifetimes. It will not forsake you.
- MS: Waiting to be recognized.
- D: It's not like it wants to be recognized. It's more like, um, by us recognizing it, we can take its hand more. It does not need anything from us. The guidance does not need anything from us. The guidance wants to take us home. It's our guardian angel. It's not like it's, after it does we say, "Hallelujah to you" and then the guidance says, "OK, now you recognize me." It's just absolutely, 100% altruistic. It is the ultimate guru. No guru in existence matches the Diamond Guidance. All gurus fall short. We can only

trust them to a certain limit. Beyond that, no soul can trust the guru 100% because they all have shortcomings.

MS: And the Diamond Guidance *is* the inner guru?

D: It's the inner guru.

MS: Same.

D: Yeah. So you can trust for example, your guru who is fully enlightened, highly enlightened, to a certain degree. But your soul knows that he has something off too. He has something to evolve and to grow and to mature. And if Buddha comes to this time he would have trouble with this machine to record or the computer, you know? So how could my son trust a Buddha who does not know a computer? He is a computer whiz. Buddha does not know it. There is always shortcomings on the human level, see. But on the Diamond level of consciousness, it's absolute pure guidance, the principal of guidance.

MS: So Gabriel, who then evolved into Avalokiteshvara, right, which ultimately is sort of a quality of Diamond-like consciousness or awareness...Is Avalokiteshvara, who is an emanation of the absolute in the essential realm, is this energetic source is flawed?

D: No, that's pure.

MS: That's pure.

D: Yeah. But if Avalokiteshvara becomes the Dalai Lama, that's limited.

MS: I see. Where does Avalokiteshvara emanate from? What are the origins and evolutionary aspects of these deity-like beings?

D: Yeah. That is the billion dollar question. [laughs] Yeah. Let's see. You go into two major views, yeah? Some views, like the lineage of the prophets or misunderstanding or understanding that God created all of that. And God is the luminous being, created all of that. The other is that no, it is us. We, as human beings, interacted with this field and created those pure forms of existence, pure archetypes. So at one time we were in pure form, before we took on this, planted into this existence and we created this existence, you know? We were the pure form, we created archetypes that do something to us. That when we planted in this realm, there's still emptiness, you know, receiving those things. So that's a beautiful different view, that it is *us*. That's why, Dalai Lama said, *we* are the creators. It's not a force outside. We *interact* with this force. We *interact* with the field. And how I interact with the field, the field

mirrors back. It's my creation and that becomes my karma. Good karma, bad karma. But it is not the field dictating upon me its wish. The field is a field of allowance.

MS: So I'm curious, I hear you saying the distinction would be, does God create us in his or her, in its image, or do we create God in our image?

D: Yes.

MS: Yet these deities or these archetypal manifestations...

D: Yes...

MS: They have a certain aesthetic quality that seems to be somewhat universal. And certain traditions might have a certain iconography. So the Tibetan deities have a certain visage or flavor to their aesthetic, right?

D: Yes.

MS: The Christian deities or angels are different. And I guess I'm interested in the essential or universal underpinnings to different cultural manifestations. Does Avalokiteshvara exist in that form to someone from a different culture who has never had contact with the vestiges of that culture? Or are they culturally specific? Do you know what I'm saying?

D: I understand you very clearly. When I contact Avalokiteshvara, that feels to me like Avalokiteshvara. When I interact, when I connect to the Imam, it's not the same.

MS: It's not the same.

D: The Imam, or Elijah, is the God of the Muslim tradition. So it has a different guide, a different deity that's different from this deity. So Avalokiteshvara exists on that level as this kind of structure. The Imam exists as this structure. And it was a big puzzle for me. If there is only guidance, how could it manifest like this or that? What I understand now is that there is a field of infinite potentiality and creativity. And high beings created from these fields, streams emerge. So then it's the Buddhist emanation streams coming from source. And there is the Jewish emanation coming. And there is the Christian emanations around us. Shamanic emanations. The lineage of the prophets and the lineage of the Buddha and the lineage of the shamans. Each one entered this field and put a ladder, Jacob's ladder, of certain kind of archetypes, that if you act on those archetypes, it has a ladder that take you to source and you come back from the source. So if you are in an image of the Buddhists

you might get Avalokiteshvara. But if you go to the Sufi you get Huder, the Green One, or Elijah. It's the same principle of guidance, but it's like a different kind of, it's not even a different kind. Like one might be coming from, made of mind. And another one maybe made of the jewels of the heart. And another one maybe made of the jewels of the belly. It's like you make lenses in the universe, right, and those lenses depend on which stream you're taking. The stream of love, the stream of understanding, the stream of compassion, the stream of action. So these are deities that all, the Diamond dimension, if you create anything from it, it always has a capacity of guidance and consciousness. But if you go to the awareness of the absolute then it's counterpart is the crystal guidance. When you get in touch, not with guidance, when you get in touch with crystals, it does not have consciousness, it does not have understanding, it has pure awareness, but no guidance. It's not interested in guidance. Because it's an awakening, you've arrived. You don't need a vehicle anymore. So it takes you to a dimension of arrival. And then it's bliss. And in that dimension the guidance might manifest. So that each gradation of assistance has a certain frequency to it. And in that dimension you can create different vehicles that can help you. The Buddhist will see *this*. I go into bardo I will *not* see the Buddhist deities. I *went* into their bardo, I saw their deities. But *my* bardos, I don't know those guides, you know. I don't know Avalokiteshvara or Buddha, they are strange people to me. But when I go into my bardo I will see either Christ or the Imam and Mohammed and Fatima, and Gabriel. These are the guys I hang around with, you know? [laughs]

MS: So how do we most skillfully recognize what guidance beings are most allied or connected with us, with our own individuated karmic streams?

D: Yeah. For a long time, when I started opening my spiritual journey, I opened it not in Sufism, not in Islam, that was the last on my list. I was *never* into Islam nor Sufism. In fact, I had to come to Berkeley and met a Jewish guy, who comes from South America to teach me about Sufism! [laughs] Mind blowing, you know? But when I got into spirituality, I entered in Zen. So I would sit and meditate in Zen. And when I received my awakening it was through a Tibetan, right? And so I would sit and meditate and I received the awakening through that state and would see Tibetan deities. Or you would see Zen, just lights and this thing. And then I met a Sufi, a great Sufi. He was the like, the Kutuk, the pillar of the Sufi lineage. And he was a very open man, highly illuminated, highly enlightened. He was like, the leader of this hierarchy for them. And he said, you know, "All those lineages are beautiful. But you were born a Muslim, right?" That was in '75. "And so Islam would be the shortest cut for you." And I thought, "Oh, this guy who's supposed to be the embodiment of guidance, of the Sufi guidance, has

prejudice?" You know? How could he have prejudice? I was young, foolish. After two or three years these words stuck in my heart and soul. What did he mean? And as I deepened seeing the bardo of the Tibetans and the deities hanging there in their bardos, I felt, "I don't know these guys." I could see them, I could receive the blessing of them, they didn't touch me. Then little by little his words came back. My bardo, which is nothing but my earliest unconscious programming in my childhood, is full of the Islamic deities. That if I am to awaken, the guidance will make me go through the energies storied in my system, not the energies I imported now, you know?

MS: And earlier you talked about looking to childhood wounding, and now you're saying childhood programming. But you've also said 10,000 of lifetimes. So I'm wondering, in terms of these conditionings, you know, whether it be of most skillfully recognizing karmic alliances for the short route, or most skillfully looking into the deepest wounds coming from our childhood, how do we know when something has been conditioned in this lifetime or past lifetimes, and when to address which?

D: Yes, yes. I know that is a big question, but for me it was really, what should I do? I found out that by dealing with my childhood issues in this lifetime, it segues in all reincarnations and I don't *need* to go there.

MS: Ahh. It's the culmination of all of them.

D: Culmination of all of them. [laughs]

MS: [laughs] How handy!

D: It was so, so stunning, I said, "My God! It's super handy! Go into reincarnations and what is this? It was so simple. Like, the guidance said, "Deal with your just Mom and Dad and what happened, and the archetypes." I was born in Islam, so archetype was the Imam, in my unconscious. My inner child would see Buddha in his enlightenment appearing as a jeweled entity, but would run away, I don't know this guy. I see Avalokiteshvara, "Oh wonderful, beautiful, thank you for the blessing, but goodbye!" But when the Imam showed up, my little boy, you know, said, "I hate you, why did you..." and started communicating with him, you know? And took his hand. And the Imam was the guide, guiding me the rest of...Oh! I need to deal and level with my unconscious conditioning. Once I decoded my unconscious, then I could receive Avalokiteshvara as the same as the Imam, I could receive the Christ as the same as Mohammed. But in my unconscious there was bias, you see? That bias was due to my early conditioning. I didn't know the other deities, I only knew those. So strong in my unconscious

were those archetypes. Once I revealed the archetypes to my unconscious what they are, it was a great liberation to reveal all the deities. Then I could recognize the whole spiritual family as *my* family. I was a Buddhist some time, Sufi some time, they are all high beings illuminated and doing their thing, and I could see them in this form or that form. So for me, when I see a lot of Christians now in the west and a lot of Jews, rushing to Taoism, Sufism, Buddhism, I feel they are so beautiful, but in order for them to really resolve their psychological structures and their psychological blockages and resistances, they have to deal with what was imprinted in them, whether they believed it or not. A Christian has to undo the archetypes of the Christ within his or her structure, and the Jewish has to do with theirs. And it's simplified for me how to deal with my inner child, how to deal with my psychological structure, you know?

MS: When you speak of the transmission of the Tibetan – it was [name], is that right?

D: Yes.

MS: And some people might have a bias of saying, well let's say the Tibetan Buddhist lineage today, that there's been an unbroken lineage of certain manifest gurus who are upholding, in their purity, certain teachings. Which might be unique to this tradition today, because certain other traditions might not have that same integrity of transmission. So would you see that as having been a unique skillful means, to receive the transmission through the portal or the opening through this certain tradition? And then once that was open for you, that realized awareness capacity or recognition, then you could go more to your individuated karmic stream? Do you think that order of operations was essential for you?

D: No. For me it happened that way. And I received the transmission from him through their lineage of the Buddha, right? Through the Vajrayana. And interestingly enough, when I entered the luminous field, you know, I said, "Rinpoche, I'm going back." I was living in Kuwait. I said, "I'm going to Kuwait. What shall I do? How can I teach this enlightenment? This is Buddhahood. How am I going to mention Buddhahood? They will kill me. Because, you know, Buddha is not really their God. Their lineage is..." He said, "Don't call it Buddha. Call it Allah. They will understand Allah. So he took it from the pure lineage of just Buddhism to something that is universal. These call it Allah, these call it Jehovah, these call it this, these call it that. And that liberated my mind to be flexible in dealing with people, you know? I can call it to a Buddhist Buddhahood, I can call it to a Muslim Allah, I can call it to a Jewish Jehovah, I can call it the Great Spirit. So knowing that, it enabled

me to be free to call it, to name it to wherever it is. I started with that and descended to where my specific markage was, which was the renunciation of Islam. I didn't want Islam, I didn't want to be a Muslim. But my unconscious was soaked in that environment. Then, once I saw that, I leveled with that, I didn't transcend it. I said, "This is where my feet are stuck, in the mud of these symbols." Then we purify them, cleanse them, see their essence. Then I was able to integrate the image of Vajrayana more. I felt more at ease. Now, for me, the guidance showed that, I don't need to go through this level of guru empowerment by an alternative guru or Sufi. Enlightenment is always here. And I can start with, I am stuck, you know? And deal with my childhood stuckness and archetypes in it. I can resolve that, and resolving that, I can also embrace the pure lineage of the Tibetans. Everybody claims to be their own pure lineage. Sufis claim they are the purest lineage and everybody says that theirs is the pure lineage! [laughs]

MS: I reveal my bias! [laughs] From exposure...

D: I know. [laughs] Exactly. I believe that. You know, I was disappointed in the Kutuk, the highest being according to the Sufism head, when he said go to Islam, you know? I thought, that's biased, you know? Doesn't he see Buddhahood as the highest of all of this? Then I matured to see, each one has their own unconditioning. By unraveling it, the guidance was able to transmute these inner objects of the essential domains.

MS: So in our earliest stage, before we've realized that the absolute qualities are our inherent nature, what does an empowerment or a transmission do for us from a realized being, from a certain lineage?

D: It does two things. When that guide, the being who is transmitting it by their grace, by their power, can lift some of the obscurations, and we have an experience and a glimpse of the absolute or of Avalokiteshvara or the Tara. They can embody it and emanate it, and we learn from merging and osmosis.

MS: Does that have to be conscious?

D: Sometimes no. Sometimes you are receiving even if you are not conscious. And that works upon the individual. And if the person's conscious, of course, it's really very empowering. But the blessings happen, you know. Once you are in the field, you get it. It might come delayed reaction into the 60's, but it happens if you get it now, you know. [laughs] This is why, the other one, it always comes with an accent. If a Sufi translated it you will feel the lineage of the prophets coming through it. And if they are Christians you will feel that Christ is coming through it. And the Buddhas are

coming from their stream. Something important. The stream of the Christ is different from the stream of Mohammed.

MS: Do you feel it is important to concentrate ourselves for a while in a certain, you know, dialect of transmission? Or just as many diverse fields of blessings of exposure as possible can only be beneficial?

D: I think it depends.

MS: In other words, is dilution a risk?

D: It depends on the stage of the person, you know. For some people, they need to focus on one, you know. Because diversity will get them confused, scattered, fragmented, and unabled, you know. But if they focus on one and that, just like in Zen, one koan reaches all the way to awakening, enhances your inner capacity and inner muscles, then you begin to integrate and differentiate. Others have more capacities to start with larger differentiation, you know, and come into more focus.

MS: And for that type of person, maybe being single-focused on one tradition might be too fundamentalist. It might actually restrict their freedom.

D: Right. Yes. It might limit them and it might restrict them. And they might need, like if you are a 5, 6, 7 you might need the diversity, right? And if you are 1, 8, 9 you need the focus. And if you are 2, 3, 4 you need the moderation. So that's where the skillful means of the guidance. So it depends upon the fixation and it depends upon the stage of the journey. At one stage of the journey you feel you really want to open, for example, the highest centers. And in opening the highest centers you need to know the different systems and the different jewels, and you feel you're really entering the opulence. And another, you feel no, you are just focusing on choosing one jewel. You just want to hone in and focus on the White essence, being grounded, solid. So in that action you become a samurai, focused on one thing and working one move 'til you cultivate that jewel. But in other stages you feel like you are in the middle of circulation. White comes, Gold comes, Pearls come, Diamond comes. There is so much influence happening in your life, that if you try to focus on one it is impairing. At a certain stage of my journey the guidance would not let me deviate from one quality. We spent like, [name] and me, we spent like three months to two years on one quality. The being would not let us go anywhere else. Bring us to zoom on this quality, zoom on this quality, zoom on this quality. Then by zooming, we get this quality more integrated in our body mind, more the knowledge about it, so then the Diamond helped us focus 'til we get that quality. Once we get to let's say 20 qualities, they begin to circulate in the system.

And to zoom in one means blocking the others from circulation. And that was painful, you know. So I used to go and teach a workshop, a retreat, and I focused one week on one quality, the Diamond Body or the Pearl or the Point. I would suffer, because my system wanted to have all of them in circulation and I had to be spacious enough to let the circulation happen and have the focus on the qualities so the group does not get lost. So I don't take them all over the map. So in the middle stages you want the circulation. In the beginner stages you zoom in one quality until you build the muscles. In the final stages you don't choose.

MS: Breadth and depth are the same in the final stage.

D: Yes, exactly. So that also depends on the evolution, on the personal preference, what fixation. Many elements that the guide, the inner guide, gives you the parameter. That's where the wisdom, it's also called discriminating wisdom. Discriminating wisdom is the same as the Diamond consciousness to me. It enables you to set the time, the place, the...action.

MS: Have you ever had experiences where you've felt that you are receiving external guidance from a realized being, that you trust is in a place of realized awareness, and yet you've had a tension or disagreement between your inner guidance and this external guidance?

D: I have had experiences of resistance, where my guidance was in conflict with them, in my mind. Take with [name], for example. His guidance would tell him something, right? We're dealing with say, the White essence. His guidance would translate it for him according to his fixation. And my guidance would translate it to me according to my fixation. Him, a 5, would go read two, three books and tell me about it. I go to the café. I go to action, I go to doing things in the world, because I am not in my mind. I don't want to go to my mind, I want a relational feel. Then we would have conflicts, seemingly. I would say, "This quality means this, you know. It means, you really go into the world and do this." While he says, "No, this quality means this. You can sit and decipher and do things like that." [laughs] And so we would begin to say, "OK, if my guidance is telling me the truth, and your guidance is telling you the truth, what does it mean?" Then our guidance will say, "It means there is more than once way of seeing it." So it can manifest this way and can manifest this way, and can manifest that way, and that will broaden the vision. So each aspect has a variety of manifestation. And for a mind person manifests this way, for a heart person this way, for a belly person this way. And instead of conflicting, it added. And instead of "Either/Or," it said, "And. It is this *and* this *and* this *and* this." And that was the beauty of the Diamonds.

MS: So when two people are in touch with their inner guidance, whether it be a teacher-student or two friends, there will only be an apparent conflict due to lack of information.

D: Yeah, exactly. Due to lack of understanding or due to limitation of personality structure. But if it's coming from guidance, there is nothing conflicting at all. At one time, for example, you might go into White essence and you might feel that essence is stability. And I go into Red essence and I feel that essence is action. Then we have conflict on what essence is. Is essence just sitting like a rock or running a marathon, right? [laughs] This seems to be conflicting. But then essence comes and says, "Look, there is Red essence for action and there is White essence for stability. And when you need stability you get the White and when you need action you get the Red. So there is no conflict between them. But on the ego level there is conflict. Should I move or should I sit? Should I dissolve or should I manifest? Should I individuate or shall I be universal? The ego always goes into "either/or." The Diamond Body always goes into "and." It's this *and* this *and* this *and* this. Because this is a multifaceted existence. You can not limit it to one thing. Everything in it exists. Will the ego ever disappear from the enlightened field? Everybody thinks when you reach the enlightened field there will be no egos. The enlightened field is always here. Not even one minute will it disappear, or God disappear. What about the egos? They are all hanging in the absolute! So will there be absolute and egos? You bet! [laughs] Look at everyday life. Egos walking in the absolute. Fishes swimming in the ocean, and each fish thinks it's unique and there's no ocean. It's just it. And they are all in the ocean. So you see this vision and there is no conflict. Does it mean when I'm in the absolute I have no ego? In one experience, yes, I have no ego. In another experience I am in the absolute I still have my ego. Is this possible? Yes, it's possible.

MS: So I'm wondering for someone on the path just of discerning what the inner guidance feels like. In your personal experience, have you ever received an instruction or guidance from a teacher who you trusted, where you felt a conflict, and if so, how did you navigate that difference? How did you know to trust your own inner guidance, and how did you know when it was an ego difference with that teacher? And how did you know when it was a lack of understanding because you had different capacities that were more realized in different domains?

D: I will first, I honor the conflict. I honor my conflict. I don't say I surrender to the teacher and he is in the right and I am wrong. I found that very destructive for me. Really, you know. I learned from the guidance the courage to say I differ from my teacher. I respect their view, I honor it, it has truth, and I need to respect my

view and honor it and find the truth in it. So the guidance helped me to have my integrity. Instead of attacking me, saying, "Oh, I am on an ego trip and my guru is right and my feeling about it is wrong," and demolishing me. That was my superego. So my guidance came and protected me from my superego and enabled me to say, "OK, I have this and the teacher says this." And then let me decipher, you know. Why am I not listening or seeing their view, and why cannot I also have my view? Then little by little into this inquiry I began to see that maybe what they see is something I am afraid to go to. Different domain or its limitation. But the guidance as I inquire will reveal to me, you know, the transference on the guru at that time or the incapacity I have to see the two realms, to see the two visions. And by the time I began to see and the more I trusted the guidance, it strengthened my inner capacities of perception and deciphering. Then I can hold the two views. Then I can see what seemed to be conflicting. But it's a process of patience, of inquiry. But honor your truth.

MS: And trust that there is an *and* and not an *or*.

D: And decipher them. How come I am conflicted? A fun story. At one time, I met [name] Rinpoche. You know the old Karmapa, he had four main disciples. One of them was named [name]. And when the old Karmapa dies, the young Karmapa was studying with [name]. The disciple of the old Karmapa became the teacher of the new Karmapa. So he's very high in their lineage. And he's supposed to be the reincarnation of the Maitreya. You know, the Maitreya to come, he is reincarnating 'til he reaches, prepared to reach that level. And one day we met and he was talking about, when will the Maitreya come. And he said, he figured out he will reach this level of the Maitreya in two million years, you know. God knows what they mean by that, you know? And he will reincarnate and evolve and grow. And then he said something, you know, made me just almost chuckle in my reaction. He said, he is 5 on the Enneagram. I am 4 on the Enneagram. He said that, "When I reach the Maitreya, when I become the Buddha, I will know all that there is to know." And a big explosion of joy and laughter in my heart came. This voice saying, "Who cares?" I don't care to know all that there is to know. I really don't. I want to be free.

MS: And was his assumption, perhaps, or motivation being that omniscience will be helpful in terms of relieving suffering for others?

D: Yes. His view as a 5 was that ultimately if you reach omniscience it will liberate you and you will be yourself and you will be in the field. Me as a 4, it is freedom. [laughs] I don't want to know. I want to dance, I want to play in the field of God! It was a chuckle.

MS: [laughs] And if I knew everything, it might actually constrain me!

D: Constrain me! Exactly! I wouldn't know to do with so much knowledge! It was funny to see how our egos were translating enlightenment. For me enlightenment was to be free, to run out like a child, wild in the universe. For him it was to be omniscient and all-knowing.

MS: And Shakyamuni was a 5?

D: Shakyamuni was a 5. So when you hear Shakyamuni it's different for you than when you hear the enlightenment from somebody else. When you hear the enlightenment of the Christ it's not like that. He's not into, I know it all and all of this. I *am* the alpha and the omega.

MS: Was he a 4?

D: I think a 2, they say. A 2 or a 4. But he was about this, *I am* the alpha and the omega. I am God, I am self, I am man. It's all about the I. While 5 is about the mind.

MS: About "One."

D: Yes. So it was a joke for me what the guidance revealed. It was like a childish attitude that enlightenment meant all-knowing or enlightenment meant all freedom. Enlightenment meant all that there is. You know, it was liberating that instead of having a conflict with the guru, it enabled me to see, "Oh, that's their bliss. That's their view. But I have to also honor my view." And to see that enlightenment was bigger than all knowing or all free. It was this universe with all that there is. Who am I to know it and who am I to explore all of it?

MS: And whether being a 5 or a 4, in your perception there's no end to evolution?

D: Not as far as I know. There is no ceiling. And that's the freedom. We are here for ever and ever and ever. In a kingdom that's evolving forever and ever and ever. From a high electromagnetic field, the field, the source. We are source-erers. Source-erers from the source, this magical kingdom. Evolving and evolving and evolving and evolving and evolving. And some of it is a mess. That's our trial and error. And some of it is magnificent. Here we are taping on this little machine. And tomorrow I fly in the airplane to Kuwait. That's miraculous. That we tame this physical universe, we fly in this giant machine in the air. So some of it is beautiful, how much we have evolved. And the spiritual kingdom is here and the evolution is infinite, for ever and ever and ever. That's what I

know about the guidance. We are in a kingdom that is for ever and ever evolving, alive, magnificent. And how to cultivate wisdom to navigate with it in a beautiful way, in a harmonious way. That's the guidance. That's the principal of the guidance, that takes our hand and says, "Guys, this is the way to do it." So when the Christ says, "I am the way," he meant his Diamond Body. When he said, "I am the light," he meant the Point of Light. And when he said, "I am the truth," he meant the absolute.

MS: So this is also the dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya.

D: Yes. This kingdom existing for ever and ever, perpetuating itself, dissolving one into each other like steam into water. If we perceive it this way then there is no higher or lower. There is less, you know, there is equanimity, there is balance, there is wisdom, there is patience, there is maturation process. That's the gift of the Diamond Guidance. That's why I call the work the Diamond Logos. This articulating existence through objectivity. That's the guidance. The guidance is objectivity.

MS: And the process of articulation is itself an inquiry that is somehow dissolving of obstructions to clarity in our evolution process.

D: Yes. Inquiry like, "this is illusion." And insights. So when you sit and just open and the insights reveal to you. So not only you inquire, not only there are some bridges of understanding, but sometimes you don't inquire. Sometimes you go deep and you are just present and the Diamond Guidance reveals you the treasure.

MS: I'm curious about this, this distinction between, and perhaps it's a both/and, but this spontaneous liberation of abiding in the absolute, which seems like it does perhaps dissolve karmic obstructions or liberate certain, um, you know, obscurations to clarity. So on the one hand there's this spontaneous liberation of this abiding, which as you say, does not involve the temporal dimension of inquiry. And there's also the inquiry process that has the sequential, articulated aspect. Are they mutually helpful? Are they symbiotic, in service of the same end?

D: The same, yeah. The same principle that comes. Sometimes from the ego level you have to be more keen, you know. Because the ego's like, you know, drifts here and there. So you have to hold the camel from wandering in the desert.

MS: So how do we discern which is more useful when?

D: When I see myself, for example, I am just thinking too much, or analyzing, or obsessively trying to figure out this, then I am efforting too much. Then I begin to doubt my ego. Or when I see

myself ignoring it. Something coming up but I space it out, I engage in things that are not there. Then I begin to control this ego or this consciousness and begin to directly see what is happening here. Why am I spacing out? Why am I being unconscious? Why am I doing this or that? And also, why am I becoming obsessively inquiring to the point that I don't trust, I don't allow the guidance? So I begin to moderate my inquiry, you know. 'Til I, the more I moderate my inquiry, the more my inquiry becomes more precise. As I define my attitude, it begins to connect to that frequency of the Diamond Body. Meanwhile, the Diamond Body in my unconscious still needs the emanation to refine the lens of my ego 'til I connect. So once I reach that level that my ego begins to trust, allow some inquiry and allow the silence and allow the not knowing, the Diamond Body and the ego begin to relate. And then more and more my ego begins to relax and insight comes. And visions. I move from intellect and inquiry to insight. Instead of making a question, I might see a red ruby emerging in my field. I feel super warm. Ecstatic. So I am not into inquiry, I am now into realization. Then in that ecstasy, in that richness, my ego arises and then holds the hand of the Diamond Body, saying, "What is this?," you know. The Diamond Body says, "Look, it's a Diamond." "What kind of a Diamond? What does it do?" Then a dialogue happens between my ordinary consciousness and between my guidance. And from that come insights, realization. Sometimes there is no ego even to ask. Sometimes the realization comes that this is this and this is this and I just know spontaneously. So sometimes I inquire, I reach the connection. Sometimes I create a dialogue, like Moses or Huder between me and the guidance, and hold the hand of guidance, shake its coats, "Tell me what's going on! Why is it Red? Why is it Diamond? Why is it in my heart? Why is in my toes? Why am I thinking this?" And sometimes there is grace. I am so relaxed. I am not asking. I am filled with knowledges. I am insight and sensation and integration and relation. So it depends also on where I am in my daily activity.

MS: And grace is also the Diamond Guidance ?

D: Yeah, we call it the Amazing Grace.

MS: I see. So there are many flavors of guidance.

D: Yes, many gradations of guidance. Guidance sometimes comes as concrete, as when the student asks his teacher, "Teach me enlightenment." Zen story. And then the teacher says, "Did you eat?" He says, "Yes." He says, "Go wash your dishes." [laughs] Very concrete guidance. Don't waste your time speculating about enlightenment, do it! [laughs] Go and do. And then sometimes comes mystical. The aggregation? Mystical, like you know. Huder

comes to Moses, remember that story, and they came across the river. Do you know that story?

MS: No.

D: Do you want to hear that story? Moses, when he was young, was wandering somewhere and then he saw this man. He was impressed. Something about this man draw him, something about his presence. It turned out to be that the man was Huder, the Green One, or in religion we call him Elijah, the prophet Elijah, manifested in form. So Moses went to him and said, "Please teach me. I know you have something to teach me." Elijah said to him, "You are not ready." And Moses said, "No. Please teach me, test me! If I fail, OK." He said, "OK, I will test you. The test is that never question what I do." Moses said, "OK, that's not a big deal. I will trust you, I won't question." So they reach a river and by the river there was an old man in a little boat, an old boat. And Elijah said to him, "We don't have any money to pay you. Can you take us across the river and make, give you a blessing?" He said, "Of course." You know, He was a good man. He took them across the river. When they reached the other side of the river, Elijah picked up a rock and smashed the boat. Broke it. And Moses gets mad. He says, "How ungrateful you are! Here is this old man crosses the river and you break his boat?" And Elijah says to him, "I told you! Do not question me. You have to go now." He said, "No, please! I will not question again." [laughs] So they traveled, they go to a village, and the village people were so mean, they were so hostile to them, they throw rocks at them, they kicked them out, they didn't feed them. As they left the village, by the end of the village there was an old house with the wall falling down, one wall falling down. And Huder said, "OK, let's drop our stick and build this wall." And Moses said, "Why should we do this for these people? Why should we build any of them walls? Look what they've done to us, they are mean people!" And Elijah said to him, "I told you! Don't question me," you know. He said, "OK! No more." So they build the wall and they travel. [laughs] And the third part of the journey, Huder or Elijah, they find a house and there's a nice couple, very sweet couple, and they just had a baby. And the couple were very, very hospitable to them. The man and his wife, they invited them, they gave them dinner, they had them stay in the house. In the middle of the night Elijah wakes up and kills the baby. And Moses said, "This is it. Even if you are the wisest man, I don't want to follow you. This is the end." And then Elijah says to him, "I told you! You cannot, you know. You're not ready. But let me tell you what happened. When we crossed the river there was a group of bandits, gangsters were coming. And they would have used the boat across the river at that spot, which would have led to the village of the old man and then would have destroyed the village. So I had to break the boat so they would have crossed somewhere else. He can

rebuild it later. And we went to that town where those people were so mean. But there was a man who had children who were very good, and the children were very good souls. And before he died he hid a little treasure, little money. He set it in that wall. And the wall was falling down. So we had to build the wall to save the treasures so when the kids grow up they can retrieve it and get their living and service through that time. And when we went to that house, that soul was an evil soul and came to creative havoc for this loving family. So I had to kick it out from another good soul to come. And he said, "Oh no, please don't! I believe you, I believe you!" But he took off. So that can come in mystical ways that we really don't know, mysterious ways. Sometimes it comes straightforward, you know. And there is a very beautiful, you like stories? One of my favorite stories about the guidance, which is shocking, because you think the guidance is mysterious. But how the guidance is clear and precise perception. It's called the stories of the three preceptors, Sufis. There was a man riding in the desert on his camel and his camel got lost. So he started calling for it and he met three Sufis who were very highly evolved Sufis in their Diamond perception. And he asked them, "Have you seen a camel lost in the desert?" And one of the men, Sufi number one, said, "Was it blind in one eye?" He said, "Yes!" The other Sufi said, "Did it have a break in its teeth in one side?" He said, "Yes, yes!" The third one said, "Was it lame in one leg?" He said, "Yes, yes! Where is my camel?!" "We haven't seen it." And then Sufi number one said, "Was it carrying a jar of honey and a bag of oil?" He said, "Yes, yes!" He said, "Was it carrying a woman?" And then he said, "Was the woman pregnant?" He said, "Yes, yes! Where is my camel?! That's my wife! You must have stolen my camel and my wife!" They said, "We haven't seen it." So he took them to the judge and the judge heard the story and he said, "OK, no doubt you've seen the camel and stolen it." They said, "No, we haven't seen it, we haven't stole it." So he put them in jail. The man went meandering in the desert, he found his camel. He came to the judge. He said, "I found the camel, they didn't steal it." So the judge brought them back. He said, "Tell me what happened." He said, "Tell me how did you know what you know?" The first Sufi said, "I saw the grass on the road and I saw that only one side was eaten and the other side was not eaten. So I thought he was blind in one eye could see, the other eye could not see." And the second Sufi said, "I saw where the bushes were eaten, there was a gap, you know. So I thought some teeth were missing." And the third one, he said that, "When I looked at the hooves, one wasn't leaving a good print. So I thought, well, one foot was weak." And then, the first Sufi said, "When I looked there was ants on one side and flies on the other side. So I looked and saw a little drop of honey and oil, so I thought it was carrying a jar of honey and oil." And the man said, "I looked also where the camel was sitting, it was completely sitting, which means on all four knees, right? And the camel does

that only if there is a woman mounting it. If a man's mounting it, they usually have just the high legs on the ground and they jump down. So I assumed that a woman was being carried." And the man, the third Sufi said, "And when I looked, there was a place where there was pee, and there a footprint of hand and knees, so I assumed the woman was heavy. She had to push with her hands and legs in order to stand up after peeing, so I assumed she was pregnant, you know. And that's why we know about the camel." [laughs] And then the judge said, "Why didn't you fellows tell us in the beginning?" And they said, "Because we wanted the man to see, find his camel and have the grace to come and tell us. And you will have the grace to know and ask us. So we wanted to add the element of the grace." So the Diamond Guidance is objectivity, precision, and grace. We don't think guidance is as precise as a computer. Sometimes it's as precise as a computer. Sometimes it's [?]. It takes your hand and feet and you don't know where you're taken. You have to trust to hold its hand. And sometimes it is, um, it is direct. You eat, you wash the dishes, it's simple.

MS: And the grace aspect is the contact of the guidance.

D: The guidance itself feels like utmost grace and the connection to it feels graceful. And when the ego cultivates the grace it cultivates refinement to be with a simpler frequency, so the connection becomes much easier. When the ego is gross, defended, and aggressive and hostile, there is no refinement. Then the blockages to the structure is so dense the guidance cannot heal it. It takes a long time to filter through our armoring. So the more we refine, the more we do our homework, you know, meditate, pray, formal inquiry, look, examine being, keenness to differentiate, is this guidance, it's not guidance. How can I know it's guidance? When we put our personal effort we get more refined. And the more we get more refined we receive more guidance and more intricacies and depth and subtleties.

MS: I think you mentioned this at the beginning, but for your own personal journey, has there been a developmental aspect to the ways in which guidance has manifested? So I realize that it can manifest in a variety of ways, but in your temporal evolution with this discovery process, did it start off manifesting with one type of manifestation and now another? Was there a developmental process to how it appeared?

D: Yes, that's what I mentioned in the beginning, it was as this image and that image and that image.

MS: Images to begin with.

D: Images and thought patterns. And also I am a heart oriented person. So when I get the guidance in the heart, my heart begins to feel different. It just, it opens up. It feels that's the truth, the message is true. So I, the guidance will come to me through heart. And sometimes learn it through a line of inquiry which is why is this, why is that, it's more like even if I ask, that just keeping my consciousness a little bit in more alignment or track, I know I can get it when I have the feeling, the emotion. So I need to know my limitation. That even the heart center, it's my strength but it's also my limitation. And I knew that my guidance, I can access it more from the heart. So I began to see where is my center and how can I receive the guidance. My mind, sometimes I trust or I don't trust my mind, wasn't developed and needed to develop things. My belly wasn't developed. So the guidance was not as vivid as when it came from the heart. So I learned in the beginning to listen to it more in my center of strength. And differentiate between my wishful feelings and my real feelings. Later on my head developed more and more so I can see and hear and know and decipher. Then my belly got more developed, I could know if it's real, the realness, solidity, assurance. So for each individual, they have a center of their body that is more active than the others. 5, 6, 7 it's easier to find the guidance in the head. And the guidance will come to them in their head. And through their mind, through the power of their mind will reveal to them the obscuration of their mind. It uses their mind to know itself. And for the 2, 3, 4 it will use the emotional body to undo the projection of the ego emotions. And for the 1, 8, 9 it's through the belly. Through the embodiment it will decipher and refine the bodily sensation from gross personality bodily sensation to essential refined sensation. If we can meet it at the center we are living in habitually, awaken to that, then we could make the best contact. Third encounter of the first kind, or I don't know what they call it. [laughs] Meet it at the center where we are familiar, and then through the familiarity the guidance will help us to evolve other centers.

MS: So is there an evolutionary arc to the fixation types of the Enneagram? Because one of my interests in the dissertation is if guidance has universal manifestations. It seems like it does.

D: It does.

MS: What I hear you saying, as far as development goes, is that we have to be careful about saying that there are universal sequences of development, because it's different for each person depending on their fixation type. Which brings us the question, is there an evolution to the fixation types?

D: Evolution from the fixation definitely there is. Evolution from the essential there definitely is. And that sometimes we talk about in

the ego books, you know, the ego fixation books, you will find that there are stages and at each unique fixation an unhealthy degree of fixation and a healthy degree of the fixation, you know. Like the unhealthy grade of the 5 is blunting the mind and becoming dogmatic and rigid and...

MS: I understand this. I guess I'm wondering if there is an evolution from type to type to type.

D: Oh, like if you go from 1 to 2 to 3 to 4?

MS: Yes, because then that would seem to help us to see if there is a larger evolution to the sequence in which guidance manifests overall.

D: From what I know on the fixation level, the guidance first reveals to you the fixation on the mental realm. It shows you the complexity and the intricacies. And then the emotional plane, what are the passions. Then into the belly, what are the instincts. Once you deal with the territory of the fixation, it takes you to the heart of the fixation.

MS: Within each fixation.

D: Within each fixation. Like a 5 came from 8. A 4 came from 1. So once the Diamond Body enables the person to see how their fixations, where their mind is, right, the 4 lives in this domain, the Diamond Body will begin to expand their awareness, their consciousness, 'til they see the whole territory they are living in. While before they only see the pigeon holes, little bit of this, little bit of this. So the Diamond Body first reveals the fixation. Then it leads them, after they expand beyond the group of the fixation, to see where's the source of this fixation coming from. The source will be usually coming from two planes. At the fixation level it's coming from the heart of the fixation. Which is, if you look at the arrows, 4 comes from 1, 5 comes from 8, 8 comes 2, 2 comes from 4, 4 comes from 1, 1 comes from 7, 7 comes from 5, 3 comes from 6, 6 comes from 9, 9 comes from 3. So each fixation, if you follow the arrows, you go opposite of the arrow, that's the origin of it. Like a 5 originated as a child as an 8. They were feisty, healthy, full of life and all this, but then they were kicked out of the animal part and the healthy part and the strength part into the mind and intellect. And if they decipher the intellectual code then they will gain the animal code. Then they go to their body and to their passion and living their life fully. But since the intellectual code has not end or beginning, because still the intellectual you can decipher and you can articulate one from after another, you can get lost in the intellectual. There are millions of books to read, so many things, you know, to know. So the Diamond Body lets the mind see the

fixation with the mind and the intellect and liberate them from the craving with the mind. And then they see that their passion is greed and stinginess toward oneself and a greed for knowledge. It liberates them from that attachment. And they see in their instinct level they are caught in survival or sexual and liberate their instinct from that struggle. Then the person feels free from the after wheel of manifestation, they go to the 8. Then they begin to feel life is going through. But it's coming with rage and anger and destruction and all of this, then they have to purify this animal part. They go realizing this vengeance, destructiveness and all of this, then they attempt to breaking the core of the fixation, integrate it. Then the person is free. They have the bliss of the fixation, which is knowledge, the capacity to integrate and define and articulate, but they are not bound by, they can disengage and enter bliss and enter the silence and enter the perceptual. All the kingdoms are open to them, and when they come out they can articulate it and bring beautiful knowledges to reap. That's on one level. So the guidance takes you to see the bigger territory, it can go up like into the mountains, and say, "Oh, I see my fixation now!" But then, let me see, where does this come from? Where is the projector of this shadow? So it will take you to the path of this fixation. For the essential level, each fixation is a representation of a certain domain. The 5 is the representation of the guide. The 5 is trying to be the Diamond Body. So they are always looking for knowledge and knowing, the knowing. And they confuse knowing with the known. They confuse information with the Diamond Body itself. So in the essential level the Diamond Body will show to the 5 what you really seek is the Diamond Body. And now we are getting lost in the theory around it, the informational level. While the Diamond Body is sometimes information, but sometimes it's the orchestrator of *feelings* and sometimes the orchestration of the energy of *action* and sometimes the orchestrator of the essential domain. And it is really the maestro that orchestrates all the areas. Then the 5 understands why they seek the Diamond Body, it's the maestro, it's the orchestrator. Then they let go their obsession with knowing to follow the guide, including silence and not unknowing, then they are free. Then the Diamond Body says, "OK, now that you found me, let me take you deeper. I am only the guide to your soul. You are seeking me because I am taking you to where you want to go. I will take you to the being that you are. And I will take you to the cosmic being that's all we are." So then the guidance takes you to your Point of Light, to the individual soul, and then great revelation, liberation. That's to me personal enlightenment. You go back to your individuated soul. Buddha goes back to Buddha. But also the Diamond Body takes you to Buddhahood. And then you get the absolute and you get your Point through the grace of your guidance. So the Diamond Body deals with the fixation on the fixation level and deals with it on the essential level. On the essential level this has never been written. I am hoping to, this will

be my contribution to the, you know, part of the unfoldment happening in this, now. Then the Diamond Body showed me the nine different domains of the fixations and what they are really precisely about, essentially, and how to gain that essential state and ultimately know that all the manifestation seek one thing. All humanity seeks themselves. And the guidance is the servant of the self. It is the consciousness of the higher self, coming to you, taking yourself, taking you back to your Beloved. It's going to take you back to your inner God, inner Goddess, and the cosmic God and cosmic Goddess. So it's quite a beautiful journey, what the guide does.

MS: And then in different lifetimes we'll cycle through different fixation types forever, in a sense?

D: I think this is the great mystery. Why does the soul choose this? How much of it is coming from grace, that the soul can choose? Why did I get reincarnated as a 4 this lifetime? Is this just by choice, or is this also my karma? So my karma might set me up in a certain configuration until I resolve my karma. And sometimes maybe a high being that's completely illuminated, chooses, you know, which station, which aspect their being will come in this lifetime to manifest. Karmapa comes to manifest the Black, Dalai Lama comes to manifest the Green, each one comes to manifest, Christ came to manifest divine love. When there is freedom, you as a soul come with the grace. If there is no new evolution, if there is so much karmic activity, then you come with karma. So we are born between karma and grace. And the guidance will moderate, will mediate, in order to make our lessons.

MS: And self-liberation is synonymous with helping others to liberate, with liberating the entire field of consciousness? What is the relation between self-liberation and being of service to others?

D: I mean, the nature of our creation is the human being is a very beautiful, majestic being, what we are. When we are in our being, when we are our soul, the natural influx is that we're [?] to come to this. You know that everybody's suffering and longing for the same thing, you know? It's just like when you love your friends and you find a nice ice cream shop. You want to take them! You know, a teenager? Let's go there! Because in the nature of our creation is a love for each other. And the level of our souls, we really want our parents, our loved ones to come enjoy their bliss. And on the soul level we know they are suffering and all want the same thing. So altruism is like built into our nature. Narcissism is built in when we lose our soul. When we lose the connection to the altruistic part we become narcissistic. The narcissistic part is the part that says me and myself, trying to go back to the altruistic self. So you guide the narcissistic part to the altruistic part, the narcissistic part heals and

you become naturally altruistic. So when they say our leaning is toward altruism, it's like teaching the ego to being in alignment to the nature of the soul. And to the nature of the great being, which is look at the kingdom that we have. A magnificent kingdom. From absolute to essential, to this relative, continuously, forever and ever. So inherent in this universe is altruism. When we lose it we become narcissistic. So our narcissism is nothing but an indication of our longing to go back home, go back to the Self. So when we reach the Self, altruism just happens naturally.

MS: And one is more identified with the fear, one more with love.

D: With love. Very simply. When I am afraid I am lost, I am trying to grapple with self. When I am in myself I am love. There is nothing but, you know.

MS: A couple of more questions and then we've really covered more than I was hoping for. [laughs] I was wondering if in your childhood you ever located or identified this source or this process of the Diamond Guidance?

D: In childhood the guidance came to me as a feeling, whenever I felt kindness, you know. Something in me would trust the source of this guidance. Like my grandparents, I seeked a lot of guidance, kindness from them. Because I was hurt so much, guidance always felt to me as compassion. The two major aggregates of guidance is compassion and benevolence. Guidance is very benevolent and very compassionate. That's why it comes always as the Green emanation. Healing the human wounds, healing the soul wounds, the psychic wounds, the body's wounds. So guidance, I could trust it whenever I feel it coming from someone who has compassion. So I remember people who were compassionate for me and that always occurs to me as the guidance, you know. So whenever I think of them I connect to the guidance through their image.

MS: Like the saint.

D: The saint. Or my grandmother, my grandfather. So those in the beginning for me as link to the guidance.

MS: And what is the difference or the felt experience between benevolence and compassion?

D: Benevolence feels like more of a mind rather than heart, you know. Like somebody telling you the way to go. Communicating to you. While the heart is more like held or just having affinity with or crying with someone. While the other one says, "My son," you know. "I know what you are trying to do and I know how hard it is, but the way you are going about it is only increasing your pain."

It's more like this attitude. Benevolence is in the pineal gland center. It's the center of soothing, of taking actions upon others, of guiding that way. While compassion is more of the heart that feels the inner woundings.

MS: And does the belly center have its own version?

D: Yeah. The belly center has more of connectedness, embodiment. Like, more of actually held in a physical way, you know? Like I remember one time I was asked to pick on everybody in the room, you know? And one day there was this beautiful woman. I loved her so deeply, she was always kind to me. She was eating some food and I had an assignment to tell her something bad. I hated Claudio for it, he gave me this exercise. Because I was always nice. And he would know I was fake. He wanted to reveal my fakeness. [laughs] So I said to her, "Look how you eat! You look like something bad." And I hurt her, right? And she was 9. So instead of going to an emotion or into a mental teaching need, what she did? No, she didn't contract.

MS: She didn't somaticize?

D: No, what she said was, "You must be hurting, would you like to eat?" [laughs] Her Diamond Body came in the belly. And she offered me food! [laughs] It was action-oriented. The 1, 8, 9, they hear about you, if you are 4 you will have a PhD dissertation on the suffering of existence. The 9 would go and buy you aspirin! You know? [laughs] So the action is more the Diamond Body acting in resistance, you know. Do something about it! You know? If the person is cold, give them a blanket. If they're hungry, give them food. While from the heart it's affinity for feeling. I know how you're wounded. You might not need a blanket, you know? If you're a millionaire, you don't need that. You need somebody who can touch your heart and soothe it. You know? But if you are lost in your mind...

MS: The counsel.

D: The counsel. That's when I felt like that's the guidance. When somebody covered me when I was cold, when somebody soothed me when I was tormented, my heart was breaking. And when somebody gave me instruction, "Well, my son, this is the way. Don't go that way. Don't act out because they are mean to you, you know?" Just like now, the guidance, I meditate on Iraq on those people being shattered. And the guidance comes in my heart and sends messages to those souls who have just been blasted out of their body. And my guidance communicates to them and says, "Please, do not hold a grudge against those who blew you up. Go to the light now. Forgive, seek forgiveness and go to the light."

Because if you hold a grudge you will reincarnate and you will kill them. You will be granted by the universe to kill them. If not in next lifetime, ten lifetimes from now. You know? You will catch this America and kill him. Or this Iraqi and kill him. Or this Israeli and kill him. But when will the story end? So the benevolence of the guidance comes to them and says, "Please, don't go that way. Take toward the light. Reach love, reach forgiveness. Illuminate, be enlightened. Get out of this karmic wheel. This is benevolence. I cannot soothe them in their woundedness or their body, unless the guidance comes to guide them that way. That's more to me like benevolence. Coming in the Blue, the Diamond Body comes in the Blue. Deep, restful Blue, soothing them, healing them, giving instruction for them, please don't go that way, go this way. But if somebody like just hear their son just got killed, stroke them, hold them, soothe them, send them Green to heal their shock and their woundedness. And in Africa I want to take them food and I want to teach them how to build their life. So all these are manifestations of how the guidance are from the different centers. Action, feeling, and instruction. [whispers] Kindness. [long pause] When you go over the points, many things, you connect what you find useful. [laughs]

- MS:* This is all so wonderful. And a lot of this you've already spoken about, so please let me know if you feel any of these questions are redundant. But I'm just wondering if the strength of presence of your inner guidance at this point in your life, if the strength or presence of this capacity varies over time.
- D:* I think it, the more you work with your obscuration, the stronger it gets, the guidance gets. Also, something to be aware of is, as we said, if you also, like, go deep in your being and attain very high states, then the unfoldment takes a monumental dimensionality to it, alright. If you reach the level of the Point of Light, then the guidance has ushered you to a very high state, exalted state. But anticipate the issues to be of equal magnitude. So then you get, you get more lost than you started.
- MS:* So this is the rebound effect.
- D:* The rebound effect is huge and monumental. So also the guidance will tell you, "This is part of the journey. You wanted the best, and here's the worst that comes with it." So it can hold the dark and the light for you, right. If you then go beyond the Point of Light you go to the absolute, people think when they reach enlightenment, that's it. They don't know that then the pain starts.
- MS:* Hence the dark night of the soul.

- D: The dark night of the soul opens on a grand scale. And the Diamond Guidance says, "Yeah, this is how it goes. You have opened to the infinite, now all the issues in the book can also emerge. So, not only the Diamond Guidance increases, but also in the dark night of the soul comes to, the power of the issues of the dark night of the soul are so powerful you cannot even see the Diamond Guidance. You feel worse than when you started.
- MS: And yet because your guidance capacities are more amplified or strengthened, you're able to handle this period better.
- D: And sometimes you're not able.
- MS: And what do you do when you're not able? What happens?
- D: Oh, everything in the book. I cry, I curse, I yell, I, you know, get hopeless, I wanted to die. I realized in time that my reactivity and my, is also part of the human journey, you know. I have to honor that, at a certain stage I lose it, you know. Then I try to accept that losing, you know. Accept that temporarily I lose it, I seek refuge in more, in the teachings, in my friends, in tolerating that, you know, I cannot tolerate this. I realize the absolute, I have to be in the absolute. I know the next day I'm going to be in the most hellish domain, you know. And I give my system a break. I say, "OK, you know, I am my humanness." The Dalai Lama cries over his, the loss of his friends, you know? He gives himself leverage. At one time he cried when there were over 10,000 people when they mentioned his friend that was, you know, captured in China, right? So part what I learned from the Diamond Guidance is humanness. Never to lose my humanness. And part of my humanness is vulnerability. Is lostness and capacity to sustain the field. The field is forever and ever here. It's the same. Buddhahood is always the same Buddhahood. But I am not a match for Buddhahood. I am human.
- MS: You can take refuge in comfort if that's what's needed at the time to rest and relax.
- D: Yes, yes. I go eat pizza! [laughs] I don't know what to do, you know what I mean? I just go mess up a little bit. Because I know I can't take it. It's unbearable, you know?
- MS: I think I'll call my dissertation, "When in doubt, eat pizza." [laughs]
- D: Yes! [laughs] When you are lost in doubt and darkness, go out for a cappuccino! So I learned to integrate some of my humanness, tolerating for humanity, tolerating myself. Before I was a spiritual superego that demanded of me a certain attitude and that defined guidance as that. Always enlightened, always in my higher body,

never fall off. And I fall. And part of my fall is my learning. My soul wants to learn. My soul wants to fall. And when I dealt with that, dropped some of my pride, dropped some of my arrogance, like all of this, what happened? Something very beautiful, every person I meet, every situation I meet is an enriching learning process. The guidance makes me learn everybody becomes my guru, becomes my teacher. Because this soul has learned so much in this field, and this soul has leaned so much in that field. And there's no person who is not intelligent. And there's no person who is not knowledgeable. That we are magnificently intelligent. Even the most stupid person is intelligently stupid. And ingeniously stupid. Then I learn about stupidity, the intelligence of stupidity. Instead of judging it, my Diamond Guidance said, "Look. Look how intelligent this person's maneuvering. In the underground, in this and that." And then grace came, compassion came, love came. So every soul I meet now I greet with inner bowing, that my God, you will learn from me, but I also will learn from you. And really it wasn't like a fake humility, it was so much richness. Where I took into this person and I learned about what they navigated, and learned from what they learned. The jewel of their being I could not see. Before it was like, yes, be enlightened. If you're not enlightened you're a lesser man and you should learn and evolve. Now if you know you're my teacher then in ten million lifetimes, what have you learned in those lifetimes? Teach me, tell me! We can all activate this jewel. With 5's, whenever I get lost, like I said, I look at the 5 and I get my Diamond Body. And with 9, whenever I get lost I get my Water state. And when I get lost and look at the 3, I get my Pearl. Each one becomes my teacher. Each one is preserving a treasure, you know. So the Diamond Body took me from the realm of mind and inquiry to the realm of the magical kingdom I lived in. And the jewels that's coming from everywhere, the 3 is a teacher. The clouds, wisdom, knowledge, the whole universe became a field of infinite learning and magic and richness and evolution. Learning in, learning in feeling, learning in bodily sensation, learning on a soul level.

MS: And the learning comes from just being open and receptive.

D: Yes. Open and receptive. And if I am resisting, my guidance tells me what I am resisting. It does not force me to be open. It says be natural, and I tell you, look, the grace of learning is flowing through you, this is what you are learning. The resistance coming through you, learn it. You know?

MS: Can you describe a little bit of the flavors of resistance that you experience? Because it sounds like recognizing resistance is synonymous to recognizing openness to guidance.

D: Yes. And one major way is distracting myself, you know? Another way is shutting down, you know. Sometimes I get a headache, you know. I know that I am resisting something in my head. Sometimes I feel heartache or tensions in my chest. Sometimes in my belly, in my arms, legs, genitals. So I use my body as a thermometer. The Diamond Body has anchored me in my body. And my body is simple to know. My mind is complex, my emotions complex. But the body is simple. Either shut down or open. Either warm or cold. Either screaming or... So I really, the Diamond Guidance shows me what is happening in my body, the location, and how I am resisting or defending. So sometimes I feel tension, sometimes thickness, sometimes I feel dullness, sometimes I feel accents, you know? Sometimes I'm spacing out, you know, sometimes I'm having reactivity, you know? Sometimes I am emotional excessively, thinking excessively, or buzzing around. All of these indications that I am not in this state. I am not grounded, I am not in touch. So what takes me back to what am I doing? And if I can not deal with it sometimes, OK. I act out, you know? I know that I am not doing the right thing, but I know I can not deal with it now. Give me a day I will face it. So these are some of the symptoms. And there are a whole list of them. Avoidances, distractions, entanglement. Each fixation invites a form of resistance or of disconnect. I might emote, thinking I am really feeling. No, I am not feeling. For example, 4's have so much drama and so much depression and so much, it seems like they are sad forever. But believe me, they don't feel sadness. They really don't dare to feel sadness. When they feel sadness, all the drama crumbles.

MS: Hallelujah!

D: Exactly! [laughs] And it's just some sadness, it's so shaming, you know? [laughs] So they create an immensity over nothing. And the Diamond Guidance will come and say, "You're just sad! You go on making a fuss over the universe, Armageddon, world war! It's just sad. [laughs] So the fixations are our ways also of deciphering.

MS: And I'm wondering also how you use your inner guidance to help you prioritize or decide upon or begin certain practices or certain ways of making decisions. In other words, especially in the psychospiritual domain of evolution, whether as a teacher or whether as, you know, for your own evolution.

D: The guidance, for me, what it does, the more I am in it, suppose I want to make a decision about something, right? My thinking is linear. And if I try to make it as objective as possible, it might take me a month to make a decision. Which direction should I go? Should I study psychology, should I do this, should I do that? It might take me months not knowing, right? Because my mind, my consciousness is linear. So I might be trying to sort out my mind.

And after I sort out my mind I sort out my emotions. Maybe I am afraid. Maybe I am this, maybe I that. After I sort my emotions I have to sort out my energies, my stuckness, my defenses. So, because of the linearity of the mind, my system is not accessible to me. The grace of the guidance is that it allows *all* the elements to reveal themselves to you. So it enables you to have a panoramic view what your mind thinks, pros and cons and all of these things to sort out your mind. It also enables you to feel your feelings, it enables you to have your body sensations, fear or courage or strength, and it enables you to see the totality of the individual as well as the external, the inner, the external. And then it enables you to have this panoramic view. The Diamond Body has this capacity and it will enable you if you align to it more and more to have this view. So instead of it taking you years to find out, it might take you weeks or months, less than that, to have the realization. And it shows you all the intricacies. Sometimes it shows you the possibility, then you can make the decision, clearer, easier. Sometimes it gives you the aggregate of all those decisions. You feel you really cannot see all of those things, but the guidance comes in a certain way that gives you certainties. That's the way. So it will either give you the full symphony, but sometimes it does not. Sometimes it takes five years during the process. Because some decisions require long time decision. So also that beautiful element about the guidance is the crystallization of time and space. Remember the story of the musician [told during earlier Diamond Logos group teaching]. He had to wait for the timing, for the space, you know. And sometimes the guidance, for example, take my hand. I look at my life. I started as a poet. In Kuwait, I loved the Arabic language, I wasn't going to go into science. So I was going to study literature. Everybody put me down. They said, "No, you are intelligent you go study science." I said, "OK." Since science was the in thing, I had to be a scientist. While in my heart's desire I wanted to revive the educational system in Kuwait. I wanted to be the Minister of Education, change all the educational system in the Middle East, and bring new literature, evolve it. Everybody went against it, and in order to satisfy them I had to go into science. I came to American and studied science. Math and business and all of these things. After two or three years it was a dead end street. The guidance made me learn what I really needed to learn. It also made me learn from poetry. I didn't know why. Why should I be in poetry? Why should I now be in math? Then I went through crisis and I had to go to a therapist and fix how crazy it was in the 60's. I got crazy in the 60s, you know? Coming from Kuwait, a mud village to Berkeley. Total insanity, you know! [laughs] So I got lost, I go to a therapist. Then I get into therapy and the guidance, actually, I wanted to be grounded, I wanted to go back to Kuwait, finish my education and go back to Kuwait. And instead, plummets you into dimensions of light. I said, I don't want to go spiritual. I just want to do bioenergetics, to be grounded and to get my act

together. And explored into spiritual language. I freak out. I rush to Claudio [Naranjo]. And instead of grounding me I just go more into spirituality. [laughs] Then I had no choice. I either make it, you know, or I am lost in nowhere lands. So, I'm going to make it. [laughs] So I put a majestic effort and the guidance takes me to shamanism and to Buddhism and to Sufism. I don't want it, honestly. [laughs] I never wanted to be a spiritual teacher, never. Not at all, I don't! [laughs] I wanted to go do something else. Like poetry, fall in love, rent a simple cottage, who wants all of this? And being takes me from this to this to this, and since I have no choice, I don't think, I either awaken or, you know, I commit suicide, I kill myself. Persevering. Becoming impeccable. Following. If this is it, I follow it. I didn't know that the guidance was holding my hand. I thought I was doing it. And it takes me to the absolute and then it takes me to the unfoldment of the Diamond Approach. And then I looked at it, I said, "My God, it was all preparation! My soul wanted to do *this*. My soul came into this life, into this existence, to participate in this magnificent symphony of our time. To be one of the people who's participating in bringing the psychospiritual knowledge and understanding and integration. It was a soul choice. And my soul took me to poetry, I became a visionary. It took me to math so I became precise and can articulate it, make it a Diamond. Then took me to spirituality, to the other elements, then took me to the new articulation, the new paradigm, of what is this kingdom about. If you asked me when I was young, would I do this? No. I would say, "This is crazy!" To go Sufi? Sufis are crazy! Buddhists are lost! [laughs] But the long range of guidance, right? Totally unexpected. I got lost as a poet, I got lost as a mathematician, I got lost as a scientist, I got lost...And only to see now, I was, the guidance was gathering the elements. You know? It's like you want to cook a stew? You bring the onions and you bring the green beans and you bring the tomatoes and you bring the lamb, and you cook it and by the end you have the stew. And the guidance was doing the long-range guidance. Some of it was also mystical, but also the guidance has vision or insight into time and space.

MS: And sometimes the stew comes fully made.

D: Yes, sometimes it's spontaneously there, you see the totality. Sometimes I can see the whole vision. I saw a vision in 1986 that's taken me up until now to integrate the knowledge that was revealed to me in one vision.

MS: Interesting. So the guidance can come in pieces, it can come all at once. But when it comes all at once, you might have to take it into pieces again.

D: Yes.

- MS: And deconstruct it.
- D: Yes. Exactly. The guidance has two aspects. Differentiation and integration. Take a lump and differentiate it. You see? And then see, "Oh! Instead of doing it all at once I can do it little by little."
- MS: So interesting. So if it comes integrated, our work is to differentiate it. If it comes differentiated, our work is to integrate it.
- D: To integrate it. The construction of things and the breaking down of things. If I want to take a project, you know, building a house, and all of a sudden I get overwhelmed. But if the Diamond Body says, "Oh, you start with this and then you start with this," then I can break the project. You will do a thesis you have to break it into questions and differentiate it and all of this, and that's the Diamond Guidance. Then gestalt it again. Oh, it's about the different views of the guidance coming. That's part of the beauty of the Diamond Guidance. Differentiation, integration, consideration of time and space, clarity, objectivity, heaven, mystery. It is a magical aspect of our being. At the same time it is concrete, scientifically concrete.
- MS: Which brings us to the present moment. I just have a couple of questions revolving around *now*. Do you feel you're in a place in your life right *now* where you're trying to make any large decisions? Or where you're going through any experiences where the guidance is being particularly helpful?
- D: Continuously. I really cannot move without turning to the guidance, asking, "What do you think? What's it about?" Guiding. If I am in it, it is flowing. I am in it, I am the stream, I am knowing, it is unfolding really beautifully. If I am not, which I fall into a lot, many things I don't know, you know. I am learning, I am evolving. Then I seek refuge in my guidance. "Where are you? Help!" You know?
- MS: Can you give me examples of actual decisions you're facing right now, very imminently?
- D: For example, for a long time I saw my son wanted to learn computers. And I saw my prejudice, I wanted him to go into meditation and spirituality and evolve, you know. And I ran into the conflict is that, am I abandoning him, by not being, like a master, putting his student on his track, you know, here sit, meditate, inquire, go to the gurus, get his blessing? I used to do a lot like that in childhood. But all the time it left something in him that I don't love him enough, I don't accept him enough, I don't see him. Even though in my blindness I wanted him to be on the right track. I saw how he is an evolved soul. He is a Rinpoche, I see that

in him. This Rinpoche is getting lost, you know, in this modern age. I have to help him! The guidance again says, "Wait a minute. What makes you think Rinpoches don't like computers? What makes you think that Rinpoches are not the prophets of our time who are not evolving spirituality, but evolving computers? And evolving technology? Because that is the human need for our time." So then little by little I had to disengage from my spiritual prejudice, spiritual preference, and see my child as a being who is in love with computers. And he's genius! And he says it, "I'm genius!" [laughs] And he is so happy, you know. And when I honor that, you know, more and more I honor that. What happened to him is that psychologically he's more stable. His soul purpose was to come. He has done spiritual work, he's centered in his spirit. But his spirit came to do technical work. Because it is a jewel needed for evolution of our time. Then I felt a great humility, felt a great gratitude that I could open up my heart and mind and see, not everybody should do their, become spiritualist, you know? Yes, it's good to integrate your spirit and have it, but we are not about the spiritual journey. We are about the journey of the spirit. And that changed the whole paradigm for me. It's not about who is studying Buddhism or becoming a Buddhist. That is primarily spiritualist. But I'm not here to be spiritualist. I am here to be, my soul came to do something else for humanity. Then I should be aligned with my spirit, then the spiritual realm will embrace me, will support me, you know? But if my soul came to do computer and my spiritual ego forcing me to be spiritualist, I betray the purpose I came here for.

MS: And the guidance is in service always of our unique gifts?

D: Yeah, your soul, the greatest need in the humanity. What gurus collect garbage? They won't! They are sitting in their thrones! Somebody needs to collect garbage. Would that person be spiritually high? Yeah. He could be enlightened. Nobody would do this dirty job. A soul comes, says "Yes, we need to do this." It's part of the kingdom. Like a loving mother has to wipe up her child and put her in a diaper.

MS: Like Plato said, a garbage man should be paid the most.

D: Exactly! It's the hardest, difficult job! Humiliating, shame, it takes a big soul to do it and a soul caught in depth of karma to learn humanity, you know? But that opened my heart and mind to see the grace of our existence. That everybody came to be a teacher spiritually, but the great spirit is with us so we can fulfill the greater destiny of what is here. So the last I believe for me was to break the prejudice for spirituality. How to connect to the spirit and connect for each soul to fulfill its destiny, you know? Those who

cannot be spiritualists, sitting here doing spiritual work, the spirit also will embrace them. And it does.

MS: So decisions you're facing right now have a lot with being a parent?

D: Yes, yes, yes. So that's I think when you ask it and you see the prejudice and you say, "No, what is it my being wants to do?" I'll tell you a story just on the side. I had a friend, you know, an older man whose wife used to come and work with me. And he was a scientist. Not involved in spiritual work. And she was fifty, going from this work and this work and this work, seeking, a spiritualist. Very beautiful and seeker and knows so much and love, and she would come to these session with me and he would drive her, you know, like 45 minutes. And come sit on the balcony, you know, and say, "Hi boss." I say, "Hi boss." He is doing his thing, I'm doing my thing. And every now and then if I do something he'd come and receive the blessing to bring his wife, but he would not do spiritual work. And he was very normal and very pleasant, you know. Growing his garden, and every year he brings me apples and pears and things like that. And I go visit them and very good, very good soul, very good being. Then after I was working here with his wife for about 15 years, then you know, I knew that he grow old and he get sick and he was dying. So I would go visit him. And I remember one day, you know, before he dies, I am, I am a psychic person who can feel what happens in bardos. When soul dies I can connect with them. I've seen gurus, high beings, you know, I won't mention names, who we idealize as enlightened, when they enter bardo, it hits them, their off-ness, like you can never imagine, you know. There was spirit of enlightened on one level and the ego was cut off on another level. And when they died, the ego came in and there was a mess in the bardo. Those gurus who were sitting in their thrones. So when this man was dying, the last days were close, he seemed to be really [?] So I went to him and sat with him meditating. And I said to him, "Would you like me to guide you? Because I know how to exit. I know how to navigate the bardo. I'll take you through this. Would you?" And he could not speak, he just nodded. So I sat, praying, and guided him through *phowa*, you know? How to exit from the body and to enter the bardo. And as we exited from the top of the head into the luminous field, all of a sudden the whole room is lit up by this kingly entity, a soul sitting on an essential throne. Jewels and being of immense grace and magnitude. And I said, "Oh my God, who has come to help this man?" You know? Here is this man dying, is this the Karmapa? Is this the Dalai Lama? Who is this high being? And I hear him telepathically saying, "My young friend." [laughs] He always called me his young friend, "It's OK. I am OK. I have chosen this lifetime to come and live my worldly life in utmost simplicity and forget my spiritual enlightenment. But to live it as a human being, raising my kids, barbecuing hot dogs and hamburgers, feel the

blessings of the daily life, struggle with this wife that wanted to know everything, and wanted to experience the bliss of being ordinary. "I am fine, you don't need to worry about it." It was *him!* Blessed me and showered me with grace and love. That was mind altering for me! Blessed soul, high souls can come as cats, can come, I began to see. High beings, I call them "the graduates," "post-graduates of the soul," having graduated from the spiritual journey, an enlightened soul comes and dwells in a mouse. I've seen it many times in those little, gerbils, is that what they're called? Or like a cat. Because a child who's a good soul in a tough situation, and this high being comes and communicates to this child on a soul level. It does not feel bad to sit in a cat's body or a mouse body for two or three hours. Then it goes into the higher spheres, and comes back. And have you seen how come cats seem to be such benevolent beings? Or a dog? Entities come and dwell there and they leave. And if you are a seer you see points of light, magnificent illumination. And they come and in a cat or in a retarded person, retarded, you know, boy or a girl, who doesn't want to develop ego, who wants their body to be pure love. And they're just emanating pure flesh love, like this. This opened my vision not to be bound by spirituality and spiritual worth as the only thing. There's so much need in the magical kingdom we are in. And each soul came to do something in this magnificent symphony. It's not only the maestro has to be there. One holds the top maestro, but somebody has to play the violin and the, and all of equal magnitude. That was a great humbling for me from the Diamond Guidance. That was the Diamond Body showed me more and more. This kingdom we live in took away my spiritual judge, my spiritual enlightened, you know, and showed me how to appreciate, how to honor. How to have the grace of seeing what is here. So I hope that might add some other grace what the Diamond Body does, what the guide does. Grace, diamonds, space, differentiation, integration, objectivity, all of these things. It's the maestro of many capacities. So it appears in a variety of ways. But ultimately, if you listen deeply, it will arrive you to your soul purpose. To what your soul is about and what it came to do. So it will show you the kingdom and then tells you are a traveler in this kingdom and came to do this and how we are to be in our livelihood and to have the courage, to have the wisdom, to have the sustainability, and to see that the kingdom will be there with you. In my will, God is with us, you know? That's what is the work. God is with us, this kingdom is with us. [laughs] I hope I'm not overloading!

MS: No, not at all! And I have one last question, [laughs] which is very brief. It's actually a two-part question. Did you notice in this interview that you were drawing upon the inner guidance?

- D:* During this whole interview I tried to connect to the guidance to tell me what to reveal. So I don't go on my own track. What could be useful, you know? So I tried to come back to it, continuously.
- MS:* Can you describe that process of how you did that, while being with me?
- D:* I pay attention to, am I getting carried away or am I sensing? Am I feeling presence or am I wrapped up in my thoughts and enthusiasm? So if I see myself disconnecting, I come back, I relax, I sense my body, I sense my arms and legs, I pay attention to my breathing, I, you know, disengage from my enthusiasm, and listen to what the being wants me to reveal. And since I am used to that, it comes fast, you know. While before I would take a longer time to listen. But now, since I teach continuously, you know, all day long, it comes faster to me. It comes faster. And it came, you know, for us this way.
- MS:* And if I may finally ask, and this should be a very quick response, I imagine, but from that place of being in inner guidance, if you could simply respond to my question of what is inner guidance? Speaking from that place of inner guidance itself.
- D:* What is inner guidance? It is nothing but the presence of this entity, inside, you know, within you. Um, it is the voice of wisdom, of your soul, speaking to you. It's the messenger of your higher self.
- MS:* Thank you. [laughs]
- D:* I hope I did not overload the field! [laughs]

Interview with Jungian Practitioner # 1 [J1]

MS: The overarching question of my inquiry is, "What has your lived experience been of inner guidance?" And this term, "inner guidance," I'm holding very loosely. It's just a scaffolding term I'm using to basically support whatever unique experience you've had. So whatever questions I have, if they don't fit to your experience, we can hold the questions very lightly. And I'm also interested specifically in how your experience of inner guidance has played out within the tradition of Jungian psychology. So given these larger inquiries, my first question is, how did you come initially to locate or identify this source or process of inner guidance in your life?

J1: Um...Let's see...Well, [name of personal growth center] had a lot to do with it. I originally went to Japan for a year and a half after I graduated from college, and when I came back I dropped out of graduate school for a time and moved to this personal growth center in the Santa Cruz mountains. And there we taught various kinds of rhythmic exercises and self-expressive art and dance. And massage and nonverbal communication. All kinds of exercises that were current at that time, that we had adopted into our teaching program. And I lived there for four years, eventually running the place. And working that closely with my intuition basically, because a lot of sitting down and deciding how to structure a program was based on kind of meeting the people briefly, who were coming for the weekend, and then sitting with myself intuiting what physical exercises, what self-expressive modalities, I intended to use that day. And then, of course, the art and the dance were very intuitive. You know, whatever came to one, you moved your body. Or, a lot of it was drawing, kind of doodle form with chalk or paper. Or sculpture, or with clay. So, that was a lot of training in trusting my intuition and being with what came forward from a deeper place internally. After that time I began my own Jungian analysis and went back to graduate school, so that my path to become an analyst really began at [name of personal growth center]. By 1980...That was in the 60's, I started there in '63, I think. In '83 I became an analyst. I had done the training at the San Francisco Institute and became an analyst and a member of the Institute. But during the early time, let's see, it was probably in '67 that I began my own analysis. And my analyst taught a brief course of exercises. You probably know the 'go to a meadow and see what happens there' kind of exercise. As I understand it, those are probably Assagioli's exercises of, what's that called?

MS: Psychosynthesis?

J1: Psychosynthesis. So we had six sessions, I think, of developing that. And I continued to use that and encountered people that populated the meadow with dream figures that came up for me. So there was a bear who had originally appeared in a cave. There was an old woman who originally swept under water in the ocean. And she came and joined me in the waterfall pool, so I could go and ask her for wise advice at any time. And in 1979, I was diagnosed with cancer. And the night before the diagnosis was made, I had a dream. And the dream was of a snake jumping at my heart. And it kept jumping, it kept jumping. And I kept, I was frightened of the snake, so I kept blocking it, hoping it would stop. It didn't stop. So I eventually took hold of it behind its head and held it, and it was about two, three, two feet long, maybe. And I seemed to be on a kind of a college campus, so I walked into a building that was kind of a U-shaped classroom building. I walked in at one point looking for someone who could help me or advise me what to do with the snake. And teachers were teaching, students were in the classroom, no one was available to speak to me. So I followed the classroom around in sort of a U-shape and eventually came back to the door at the side. And there was a bench just inside the door. So I sat down, and for the first time I really looked at the snake. It was dead. I had squeezed it to death. [pause] So that was rather frightening for me because the next day I was diagnosed with cancer. And it was a fast growing, well there were two cancers, but one of them was fast growing. So within the week, I think, maybe ten days, I was in surgery. It moved very fast. And I had a mastectomy, so there was another week of waiting for the results. And when the results came back it seemed that no new growth of the cancer had gotten into the lymph nodes, so I was basically free and clear. I didn't have to do any more treatment. And at that point I could stop worrying about whether I was going to die. That was my initial interpretation of the dream, was that I killed the snake, I was going to die. But at that point I sat down and took, went back into the dream, which is something I had learned to do as a Jungian, as an analysand. And I took the snake, dead, and I carried it with me to my meadow. I took off all my clothes, I jumped in the waterfall pool, and spoke to the woman sweeping the bottom of the pool. And I asked her what I should do with the snake. And she said, "You should take it to the top of the waterfall and bury it and come back in three days." So I did what she advised and buried it, and three days later I sat down again to do active imagination. And I went back, spoke to her, and she came with me to the top of the waterfall, and we sat and indicated that we were ready. And from the place where I had buried the snake, I remember it was about two feet in the dream, a fifteen-foot snake rose straight up out of the ground and then came toward me. And I was sitting again naked, so I was rather vulnerable. The snake wrapped itself around my body, got to my eye level with its face right there, maybe half a

foot from my face, and said, "I could squeeze the life out of *you* if I chose. But that's not what this is about." She indicated her name was Rosie. And when she said that, I realized this was not coming from my personal unconscious. Because that would not have been a name I would ever have chosen. She was her own entity. She comes from what Jung calls the *psychoid* reality. And she had come as an ally, in the shamanic literature. She had a lot to teach me and I could help her manifest in this world. So she's been teaching me ever since. And she's delighted to have this interview. [laughs] We talked about it this morning. And her teaching has been a real mixture of inner and outer. And the interplay of inner and outer. And sometimes what seems almost miraculous or horrific, [laughs] whichever you want to call it. In that first year she taught me a lot about breathing. She insisted I go to an ashram, which I had been attending sporadically before this experience of meeting her. And I started going to an hour and a half meditation in the morning, and at one point I was driving up the coast to, I think Walala, was where I was headed for a personal retreat over a weekend at a friend's house. And I came around the corner at Jenner, and there was a way that my car just slowly turned, but it kept on turning, onto a grassy area, and then it turned until it was very gently lying on its side. And I was down, you know, at the bottom of its side. So I climbed up out of the car. The person behind me had seen what had happened and drove on to Jenner, half a mile, and sent on a tow truck. And within a half hour the car was righted, I was on my way again. The only thing that had happened was that the rear view mirror was out of alignment. That was the only thing that had happened. No scratches, nothing. So I got to where I was going and I talked to Rosie, and she said, "You need to take this seriously. I mean what I say and if you don't start really committing to this, this is going to, you know, I'll keep upping the ante. You need to get to that ashram, you need to meditate. Do it for seven days. Don't come back to see me until you have." So she could be quite specific [laughs] and quite forceful. And I did do those things. And there would be again interplays of inner and outer. Some years later I had another cancer surgery and then moved to Marin. And another almost accident happened. Again, I needed to, I had been very active with her for about a year, and then I got into a relationship. And I checked it out with her and it was fine to spend less time together. But when I had moved it became clear that I needed to spend time with her. In the night there was a bird that signaled almost every night at 3am. And I was to respond to that signal and go out on the deck of the house we had just bought. And I think at that time I was doing tai chi. So to do my tai chi and then to sit and drum and to come and talk to Rosie. So I would spend about an hour every night with her doing that. And that went on for about three years. And there have been periods again where it has become very active. Right now is a pretty active time. And in the meantime, she'd said I needed to get an outer teacher. So I

became a part of the shamanism psychology group that was part California Jungians and part Colorado Jungians. And we met outside of Denver for six, the group met for seven years there, I was only part of it for six. But that was quite powerful for me. And I worked as a client with the man who ran that group, who was a shaman and Jungian psychologist in Denver. And worked with him for a couple of years and then became an active student of a Lakota woman who was part of the group. So did vision quests and Sundances. And a group of us from that shamanism and psychology hired her, well, paid for her travel to come teach us here several times a year. So I got very actively involved with [name]. [Name] was her name. So she's taught me quite a bit about, basically, the Lakota are a shamanic culture, and vision quests are visionary. But they're shamanic with teachers, but not with, and sometimes the teachers are healers in the shamanic sense. But there also is a sense that each person can access their own shamanic wisdom through the vision quest. And Sundance. Sundances are incredible. So I've participated in that. I've known [name] now for 15 years. And at this point I'm an elder in that tradition. But, so back here, the group still meets, it's all California folks at this point. And we have a drumming group three times a year. And the fourth time we have a long weekend, present to each other, talk to each other about our work. And half of the group is Jungian, the other half has other disciplines that are part of, not all of them are therapists. But we talk about our work in the shamanic and psychology interplays.

MS: And did the teachings of Rosie remains harmonious, or at least consistent, with the teachings of [name]?

J1: Yes.

MS: So they seemed to be symbiotic, or synergistic, the inner and the outer?

J1: Yes. Probably synergistic is a better word, because I don't...I mean, [name] would, doesn't teach about inner allies, particularly. So, that's been on my own. But they certainly interact in a very comfortable way. So, and now, I've taught shamanistic psychology at the Jung Institute, public professional programs, I guess you could say. And I've regularly taught the interns at the clinic and the candidates. I've particularly now concentrated on active imagination and its overlap with journeys in its shamanic form. So, that's one of my contributions at the Jung Institute here. And I have a group privately that meets for four hours every two months. And mostly we journey together.

MS: You had mentioned that in this encounter with Rosie it seems to be a mutually beneficial relationship, in which you're helping Rosie to

manifest in this realm. First of all, who is Rosie? Where is she from and what is her purpose? And how is it helpful for her to manifest through you in this realm?

J1: Well, I do feel that everyone has an invitation at some point in their lives from a figure that has wisdom. And that comes from a place outside of personal, maybe even archetypal...No, I'm not sure about the archetypal level. Jung calls it the *psychoid* reality, which is a separate reality than this one. And I'm [laughs] not sure how much I can describe of it other than that. And the figures that come, unbidden, are called "allies." This is partly shamanic literature. But not everyone knows that they have been invited to connect. Not everyone responds. But Rosie certainly appeared in a way that was hard for me to ignore. And I was primed already to be open to her form. I mean, I'm a Jungian. She came in a dream, it was perfect in that sense. And I've watched my children. When they were about two, each had a series of dreams. My son's dreams were of lions. And we spent a lot of time at the lion feeding at the zoo, and we had books about lions, we did a lot with lions. I don't think that's really connected with him so far. But when I worked, was a part of it when he was two, it felt to me like this was his ally calling. My daughter had a dream of a snake under her crib. A dream... She had a whole series of dreams of a snake under her crib at about the same age. So neither of them has done that much with those figures. And I think a lot of people have dreams like that. In my case, I responded. And Rosie responded. The reason she said she made herself fifteen feet tall, and up in the air, which a snake can really do, was to get my attention, you know. I hadn't paid attention in the dream. I had squeezed her to death. And she wanted to make sure that I respected and to some extent feared her. Because that would get my energy directed towards her. And then she was quite explicit about what was happening. She said we have a lot to do together.

MS: And again, how are you of service to Rosie?

J1: Rosie can't express what she knows, and any of her energy, in the world without me. I'm a physical vehicle for them. And there have been times when it's been quite powerful. One of the times I've particularly, and I've ended my chapter [in book identifying commonalities between Jungian psychology and shamanism] with this experience, about an experience that happened in therapy. I was working with someone and the person kept denying his own power. And at some point Rosie spoke. It was not my voice speaking, even. But it was a powerful voice that came through me that said, "Make yourself bigger!" He got the message. I got the message too, because that's one of my issues, which is making myself bigger. Rosie was in my mind making myself quite a bit bigger! [laughs] So, um, and we're working on that now. One of the

things that's sort of advanced my work with her was a book that was written by one of the people who was a Jungian from Colorado. Jeff Raff is his name. And he's written a series of books and Jung and the Alchemical Imagination is one of his books. I think it was his first book. But the one I read last summer is the one I've been waiting for, because he described this in one of our meetings. It's a series of practices, he calls it. The book is called, The Practice of Ally Work. And it's a series of 12 exercises, I guess practices is what he calls them, on how to find an ally and how to work with that ally. And he has a series of beginning, intermediate and advanced exercises. And the advanced ones are about developing further energetic power from, for the ally, and as a result for yourself too. One of the more advanced exercises was to have your ally introduce you to another member of the *psychoid* reality. To work with that figure for a period of time and then to let the energy of that figure enter your ally.

MS: To help to empower your ally to a greater degree?

J1: That's right.

MS: But you have the privilege of being the intermediary to introduce figures in the psychoid realm? They can't introduce themselves to each other? It has to be through you, somehow.

J1: Not so much that, no. Rosie helped introduce me to this figure. My job was to interact with the figure so that I became more aware of what that figure was all about. In my case it was a dragon. Umm...But it was through me that that merger could take place, yes. And it's energy. So it's energy that Rosie now emanates. But it also gets expressed through my body as energy. So it's a quite powerful process. And I have to say that when I read Jeff's book for the first time, as I was traveling back to visit my son in New York City, I cried. I was so excited to be able to see more ways of getting even more deeply connected with Rosie. And she's been thrilled about it, too. So I'm in the process of sort of reorienting my life in some fairly practical ways, with time and money, so that I'm more available to do even more work with her. And I also have in some ways been waiting until my children are grown to have the energy to do more. Teaching and working, I don't know what form it will take, exactly. But I've just, as a volunteer, joined an environmental, kind of an environmental group, called [name of group]. And the appeal is, the core of it is a shamanic culture, the Achuar, in Ecuador. So all of that is happening. It certainly impacts my work as a Jungian analyst. I find Rosie can be very helpful. Sometimes quite specifically helpful with clients, but sometimes it's just sort of a background kind of energy. And I find myself doing more and more active imagination with her. And teaching it to interns and candidates. One of the contributions that Jung made that's so

powerful was to have *direct* access with unconscious material. And to continue to explore with whatever symbolic form that's taken. To explore that, and it opens up possibilities that are well beyond just interpreting what the symbols are in the dream. You can actually interact with those symbols, if you want to call them symbols. They're more than that. They're very alive for me.

MS: And what does Rosie, her teachings, her guidance, as well as the dragon, what do these seem to be in service of? You'd mentioned increased energy, for you to show up more. Are there basic themes that the guidance is towards?

J1: Well, I think they're all manifestations of what Jung calls "the Self." She's a very personal being, she has a personality. But it's the energy of the divine is what it is. And she's teaching ways to manifest that in myself. And to teach other people the same. There's a wisdom in it. And it's interesting, because I'm working now, once a month I do a day, 8-hour, retreat with a man who teaches mindfulness meditation. And we recently had a conversation because Rosie is trying to encourage me to be aware of her all the time. And therefore to allow her energy to be present all the time. I'm not at the place where I can remember to do that all the time. I get caught up in what I'm involved with. But I'm working on that. But my teacher in the mindfulness tradition, said, "Well, you won't be headed towards enlightenment if you're working to make Rosie your focus all the time." But I said, "Yes, but I will be working toward being in touch with the divine, which is what you're doing also. Enlightenment is your objective. It seems to me."

MS: His point was that Rosie was a more relative aspect of absolute awakening?

J1: Different aspect. That enlightenment in Buddhism was a very specifically defined process that requires a specifically defined way of accessing it. And I agree. He said, "The one thing I ask is that when you're doing the work with me, focus on *that* work, and be attentive to being present in the process there, rather than trying to attempt to being attentive to Rosie in that moment."

MS: How did Rosie respond to his opinion?

J1: She has a lot of flexibility. [laughs]

MS: [laughs] And the dragon?

J1: The dragon was interesting. Initially, the dragon was about this size (roughly one foot by one foot), because that's how I was comfortable with it. Eventually, I already had the experience of

Rosie shape-shifting into a dragon, a white dragon. Because we had done an exercise with light together. She's basically a black snake, but she became entirely white and so did I, from light. It was heart energy. So she, I rode her as she flew over the landscape, earlier. But in this case it was a separate dragon and the conversation with him, I guess it was a him, was very interesting. Initially a little tricksterish, but he settled down and I settled down and we had some good conversations. And then he was willing and she was willing for this merger to take place. So Rosie has more power, more energy.

MS: How was the dragon complementing or providing teachings that Rosie gave you? Why the invitation to supplement Rosie's teachings with the dragon's energy?

J1: Well, it wasn't so much the dragon as a particular form, but another psychoidal being, with energy. It's to add to the energy of my ally. And it's recent enough, I can't really tell you what the difference is yet. But that's in process.

MS: So the dragon is in a sense... That's an ongoing relationship that you have with this dragon as well?

J1: The dragon doesn't exist anymore. It's all Rosie. That particular dragon... That's the difference between an ally and a power animal, if you will. I have a fair number of other animals that are helpful to me. And I call on them for particular functions. I have a bear that originally appeared in a dream. And the bear has been very helpful in physical healing. There's a woodpecker that appeared to me in a vision quest. Actually, my first. It spent six hours tirelessly circling where I was sitting. And the woodpecker helps when I need to work on something that's very difficult to break into. [laughs] I had a dream with a fly about this size [uses hands to indicate a square foot] on my shoulder, and so the fly has been helpful. And for me, the quality of the fly that's been most powerful is vision, it's ability to scan huge spaces. There's a coyote that appeared on a ski slope once. And we just stared at each other for a period of time. And I looked back to show my son, and as soon as I looked back it was gone.

MS: So when these power animals arise in the internal or external realm, they're for momentary teachings at a time when those teachings seem, when you seem receptive to those teachings?

J1: Exactly. But they aren't momentary, because I can go back to speak to them. That's the power of active imagination. I can go speak to them at any time. The coyote, interestingly enough, [laughs] I most often call on to find parking. [laughs]

- MS:* Pretty helpful in this city! [laughs]
- J1:* He moved from the ski slope...
- MS:* So if I understand you, with power animals, that conversation is usually initiated by you. Meaning, after they manifest and call your attention to them, afterwards...
- J1:* There in the meadow I can go meet with them where I usually find them.
- MS:* And with Rosie, an ally, there's more of a sense that the call and response can be initiated by either? It's less within your choice of initiation?
- J1:* Well, I can choose. But she can choose also. And she is herself. She has a name, she is not all snakes. Whereas these others are basically representatives of the species. They're not a particular individual coyote. And they have these specific areas where they're helpful. Basically, it seems to me, that shamans frequently have helpers that help them when they go into the underworld. Whichever world they go to of the there shamanic worlds, the underworld, the middle world, the upper world. And that's what these are for me. And they can help if I'm in particular need of something. But Rosie can call me. I feel Rosie as a vibration in my back. I also feel her and see her as a kind of yellow light that fills the space. So that I can call on, or Rosie can present herself to me there. And occasionally, Rosie will call me in words. But more often it's in these other forms. And I do have a daily practice. I speak to her each morning. And once a week I do the more intense exercises that are a part of Jeff's book. At this point I repeat some and modify some to do what we need to do.
- MS:* And if I understand, the more time that you're aware of Rosie's presence, the more you are attuned to her being in your consciousness, the more mindful of your connection. And that itself is your connection to increasing awareness of your connection with the divine.
- J1:* Yes.
- MS:* That's synonymous. It's your portal to the divine.
- J1:* And in my practice it often helps if I let go of my ego trying to do something and let that come through either in silence or in particular words that come to me. So it very much influences what I do in many aspects of my life. And I think because Rosie is, well Rosie came to me on my own. But the Lakota teachings are very much connected to earth and all of my relations, animals, plants,

rocks, water, wind, whatever has spirit. And that there are spirits in everything. And that enlivens my life and helps me to place myself as part of the entire network of power. So a lot of the teaching and a lot of the emphasis is on power *with* everything else. In contrast to power over. Or under. [laughs] So, that also fits with Rosie and what she has specifically taught. Well, she's a snake and what being a snake is. So the connection with earth and air. She also now shape shifts more too, so there's a chance to explore quite a bit.

MS: Has there been a developmental aspect to your relationship with Rosie?

J1: Oh, absolutely.

MS: Can you speak to that a bit? Either the relationship, herself, or both? As well as you?

J1: I think initially she had to make herself heard. And turning the car on its side was one way of doing that. And then years later again with the car. Just getting my attention. So a lot of that was what she needed to basically teach me to be more attentive. At this point I *am* more attentive. I'm working with her as much as I can. And I'm not sure where we're headed, what we're going to do together. But I am sure it's something that will be enlivening and that has a lot to do with the Jungian work I do. But maybe expanded from that in some ways as well.

MS: One of my central inquiries within this larger question is discerning between false and authentic sources of guidance. Basically, how do we know what to trust? How did you know that you could trust in Rosie? And how do generally discern between authentic and false confidence in relation to trusting your guidance?

J1: Hmm. Good question. Let's see...[pause] Well, the fact that there was such an interplay of inner and outer gave me opportunities to check out what Rosie's teachings were all about. And to be startled by the interaction of those two realms. Um...I'm not, I don't...I think, for me, some of it has to do with whether I'm really responding from the ego place. I think sometimes I make up things that feel more ego based or less deeply connected. And then it's more like a kind of small "s" self-talk. And certainly in talking with my analysands, then the energy of it is indicative of whether it's false or true. The false guidance doesn't make sense, doesn't feel right, you know, has an energy that's jarring in some way. And the energy of true guidance comes through as a very deep feeling of ahhh. [sighs] Something has just very powerfully happened to you. And my experience over the years with that has been able to trust that feeling. And I was checking it. You know, usually I'm in a situation where there's an ongoing-ness to the work with my client

and Rosie and me, so I can check it out at the time. I think I may have a tendency *not* to take it as seriously as I could, rather than *over*-valuing something that I shouldn't. I'm learning from Rosie in the last 6 months that if I can stay aware of her energy in a powerful way, there is a lot more available to me than I ever dreamed of. So, it just is a matter of learning, I think, over time. But there is an energy difference between the false and the true.

MS: And I know you just spoke towards this, but as far as the energy itself, the ego-based guidance feels more jarring, less deep, you said? Can you describe the discernment of energy between the capital "S" and the lower-case "s"? Experientially, that seems so helpful.

J1: Let's see...Well, I'm just exploring it with you, so these aren't things I've put in words, particularly. Um...I guess the ego-based somehow feels like it's working with the mind and sometimes it can be quite, there's a kind of energy with mind work that can be exciting. But there's a way in which it doesn't connect with the deeper roots, somehow. I don't...And I don't, some of it has to do with how connected I can be with the other person. And that's similar to what happens to me with Rosie. Now, I'm a feeling type. That's a part of my Jungian understanding that's been particularly helpful to me, in Jung's typology. So I operate on *connection*. That's one of my highest values, it's one of the things I pay most attention to. So if people are talking too theoretically, I'm aware that I sometimes tune out. Or I try too hard to be in that realm. So I connect best when we're at a feeling kind of level. And so that's part of what I'm talking about as I, that's where wisdom comes from for me. That's where it's most trained in me. And where I can access something really deeply. Rosie is an interesting combination of feeling, but also she can be a sensation, which is...Sensation and thinking are my inferior functions. [laughs] Especially thinking. But Rosie can be very particular. I mean, the time she told me I needed to go to the ashram *seven days* and not to come back until I had. I mean, she has that level of bossiness about her. So being able to work at *that* level is helpful to me too. But the feeling connection is something that I pay attention to a lot. And my experience of the Self-experience, capital "S," it does often happen when I'm with Rosie, because she is *my* manifestation of Self. Or, beyond Self. Because I think of Self as the part of *me* personally that is my sort of portal to the divine. And Rosie is over there, beyond the portal. She is other than me. But she also is me, increasingly, in that we work together. So, the experience of a Self-experience, there's a kind of simplicity to it. And a, well, visually there's an aesthetic quality. I think of Self trays in the sand tray. They're often very simple. But absolutely gorgeous. And they express something that people may have worked for years to get to. And then all of a sudden this very complex interaction of work expresses itself in this very simple, but

profoundly felt, experience. And you can *see* it. You can also *feel* it when you're in the room with someone and they're talking about something that's very deeply um...reverential for them. Not in the religious sense, but spiritual sense, energy sense. You can *feel* it. And it feels like there's something that just kind of cleared out all the...all the complications and the excess. Whatever has been in that place. And something has just opened up a big breathing space. And there's awe. Numinous is the word that I guess I'm thinking of. There's some way in which that gets expressed. There's a numinousness to the experience that distinguishes it from other less deeply felt experiences. So, yeah.

MS: I have an image of sitting in the middle, in the center of the mandala.

J1: Yes. Yeah.

MS: And all the energy of that, the generativity and the mystery is available because you haven't yet fixed with the logical mind, which happens outside of the center.

J1: Yes. That's what's so powerful about the Sundance, to turn back to that. To *pray* with your whole body every moment that you're dancing. It's a very simple dance. You know, you lift up your foot, put it down, lift up your foot, put it down. But meanwhile there's singing taking place, and drumming. And it's all focused on the tree in the center of the Sundance pavilion. And the tree, for that period of time, those four days, is the divine. *Tunkashila* is the Lakota word for it, which is the great mystery. And that's their expression of God. And so to pray with your entire body, focused on God, which is a tree. It's a cottonwood tree, covered with colored strips of cotton and tobacco attached to it, which are prayer flags that people have attached when the tree is raised, so it has this color, the wind energy, the sun. It's a big experience [laughs] that's hard to...It's just a very powerful, deep experience. And of course, I don't have the physical ability to dance for four days. I dance for one day. But the people who dance for four days go into *very* deep trance. And it's incredible. They do a healing on the third day and the energy coming from each one of them is quite powerful. So, that experience is what Rosie is part of. And the ability to connect with that is what she and I are working on.

MS: You mentioned the mindfulness teaching presenting a different paradigm, perhaps. At least in how the teachers are articulating it in terms of the Buddhist enlightenment paradigm and the Divine that you've experienced with Rosie. I'm wondering, in general, about this experience of inner guidance and external forms of guidance from readings, from teachers, from traditions that have manifested for you. You've mentioned a variety of traditions, the

Buddhist, the Lakota, the shamanic, the Jungian. Is there sometimes a tension or balancing act, experientially, for you in terms of what your inner guidance has oriented you towards and what external readings or teachings or traditions have spoken to? And if so, how do you navigate or negotiate that balancing act, or the possible tension that might emerge between the internal and external realms? I know that's a very large question. [laughs]

J1: Yes. [laughs] Probably the biggest struggle for me is the very practical, the everyday, you know. I see people on the, you know, in hour segments. My life is quite structured as a result. And then the practical demands of raising children. Um... Those two worlds are the hardest to put together for me. And yet it's happening. The Jungian world is actually, the way we were taught to become analysts was to become as much as possible ourselves. As separate people who did things our own ways. And of course we have different ideas about how we do that. Which is part of what makes it stimulating, to be at the Institute. It makes it hard to define what a Jungian analyst is. [laughs] Because each one is different. We aren't trained in particular techniques. Although there are some, you know. Sand play, active imagination and dream work. But people's work with dreams can be quite different as well. So there is at least an openness to that. I'm sure there are people at the Institute who feel that some of what I do and have to say about it, is totally not the way they would see things. And we talk about that sometimes. But there are enough people who value it, that that seems to work for me.

MS: What might some tensions be between a classical Jungian perspective and the work that you're carving out?

J1: The classical Jungian perspective is not the problem. It's the ones who've become more psychoanalytic. And so, their work is with the transference and only the transference. And not so interested in sand play. They're not so interested in active imagination. That's not what they do.

MS: So the classically Jungian paradigm and the shamanic paradigm, there seems to be no conflict.

J1: Let's see, is that quite true? Certainly, comparatively, that's quite true. Jung actually had a pretty shamanic part of him, so... One of the articles that I had read about in the Shamanic Journal rather than the Jungian one was his experience, it was written by an analyst from Boston... And it was about the Million Year Old Man that, particularly, in the last years of his work, he would meet with people and he would talk about what the issues were they were dealing with and what were the dream images they were dealing with. So it would be on their personal level. And then after a time,

he would pause and then shift into this sort of monologue that seemed on the surface to be unrelated to what they had been bringing in. And he would talk around...And then they might come back to their own material. They would leave the session and then realize that it very much had to do with what they were struggling with. But it carried it to a different level. So they felt that they were talking at those moments, they were in contact with the Million Year Old Man. And that something had come through him. And Jung operated a lot on his intuition. One of the stories was of his deciding that he wanted to take a bicycle ride over the Alps to Italy. And he persuaded two friends of his. Somewhat reluctantly they agreed to go on their bicycle trip. And the first night they camped. And in the night Jung woke up and realized he was going to go home. So he got up, got on his bicycle and left and went back to Zurich. And his friends weren't too thrilled by that. [laughs] But he operated on his intuition as much as possible. I try to operate on mine, but not quite as much as that. [laughs] You know, like I have obligations I try to fulfill because I've committed to them. But...So that's the more classical Jungian, that's Jung as a shamanic teacher. And I think there are more and more people that do transference work and tray and active imagination. A combination is occurring today.

MS: Have you ever received contradictory messages, let's say from [name], the teacher that Rosie encouraged you to come into dialogue, and with Rosie? Or let's say, with your mindfulness teacher and let's say with a Jungian mentor, where you've received contradictory messages of guidance that you've had to negotiate for yourself that have been very difficult to reconcile? And if so, how do you negotiate that space of discernment? Or do they tend to be pretty harmonious, the inner the outer, these different voices of guidance?

J1: Well, they frequently are harmonious. But there are times...The one I can think of, and tell me if this is responding to what you're asking...[name] is both teaching people of other cultures her tradition, but also wanting to carry on the tradition in its purest form. So she was teaching me and others in our group, she was hoping that we would become initially sweat lodge leaders and then learn the other ceremonies and gradually be able to be the ones who are able to lead the Sundance or lead vision quests and so on. And so, I continued on that path for quite a while with her to the point where it looked as though I would be the only person in the Bay Area left that would be a sweat lodge leader. And we were about to create a new sweat lodge for me to be the leader in and I would teach other people it. And it was at that point that I realized that that was not my calling. That I didn't remember the Lakota songs very well. That I wasn't drawn to learn them. I didn't try to push myself, force myself to learn them. They're beautiful. And I

admire people who *can* do that. But somehow I could not get myself to learn both the words and the music, that it was just something that seemed to be both beyond me and not my calling, as I said. So I had to tell her that.

MS: So it wasn't syntononic with your intuitive capacities, in a sense.

J1: Yeah, it didn't fit. And that didn't fit with what Rosie was pushing for either. And there *are* people who are sweat lodge leaders. There's one analyst now who has led sweat lodges, has a sweat lodge on her property.

MS: It's such a beautiful example, because you felt that this wasn't your calling, but at the same time a teacher you'd committed to, in a source tradition that you really identified with, was calling you to that. And yet Rosie, it seemed like, perhaps you gave some, not favoring, but you identified, I suppose, more with Rosie's guidance over...

J1: Absolutely, yeah. Because Rosie is very individually linked with me. And [name] and I have a good relationship. But sometimes I offer guidance to her, and vice-versa. But, I don't think she really knows me as well. Nor I her. I've learned a lot from getting close to her, because there's a very different way in which Native American women, I think this is probably beyond the Lakota tribe. They don't speak if they don't have something to say. And they don't talk superficially much, so...And they aren't reassuring very much, either, that's not their thing. [laughs] But, there can be some very deep connections. So, it's been really good for me to get to know [name]. But, she continued on and found, it's actually an Italian man, who actually was a gestalt therapist, who gave up his gestalt practice to learn the Lakota practices. And he now has a group with over a hundred people in Italy who he does sweat lodges for each week. He travels to four different parts of the world and brings them together for vision quests. And he is in the process of learning to lead Sundance. And that's what [name]'s vision is, that's what [name] wants to have. I'm so glad she found someone who can really carry her teachings in that way.

MS: With confidence...

J1: Yes. And with a deep commitment to it. And that was not my calling. So it's helped our relationship, too.

MS: I'm wondering how your inner guidance might help you to prioritize, or decide upon, or to begin or to embody specific practices, psychospiritual orientations, decision-making or choices? So, you mentioned [name of environmental group], new invitations are coming up to work with the Achuar tribe or different types of

ecological engagement. And I'm wondering how you're inner guidance helps you in choice making, in prioritizing and choice making?

J1: Well, that's gotten more specific lately. I've gotten to the place where I now, at least once a week, I was doing it in daylight for a lot of the summer, but once a week now I spend deeper time with Rosie. And I usually start, I have a book that I journal, that I keep these conversations in and I do it in writing. And I start with a question that I want to ask Rosie. And it has to do with what's next in my life and how can I handle something. Something that she would have some relationship to. So most recently it was doing the Pachamama facilitator training. So I was supposed to do that training last weekend, and Rosie was great about that, she thought that was going to be fantastic for me. But that's the one limit that, um...Rosie doesn't have, just like any Self figure, doesn't have a sense of human body limitations. I got sick. You know, I was trying to push it too fast. There were things I need to sort out in my life before I can do that so as to have a spacious period of time, rather than feeling like I'm breathless all the time with what I'm trying to take on. I mean, I love a lot of the active, I love most of the activities I'm involved with. But I have the tendency to want to do more. [laughs] So I got the flu and wasn't able to do the training. So we, you know, initially she had been very excited about this happening, but she's very supportive now of taking it slower, finding a way to be...She's, we're working a lot now on my not always being breathless. [laughs] Trying to get to places on time and all that stuff. Which I'm better at. I was close with you. [laughs] So that's part of the teaching right now, is to find my way with that. So that I can have a more spacious sense of being able to add this in my life.

MS: May I ask you about this once a week that you spend a longer time with Rosie? What is that like experientially? You mentioned at the very beginning you'll ask a question that has to do with your work with her. How does that evolve?

J1: Well I do have a particular form right now. My forms vary sometimes, you know, over the years. But right now what I do is I do prayer in the six directions, which is of course the Lakota combination of...You know the six directions? And I include earth, all my relations, breath, because my first vision quest was with the wind and very powerfully with the wind. And that helps me to connect with the air in the atmosphere. Al Gore speaks of it being a shellac-thin air, really. So my thankfulness for the breath that allows for life. And the sun, moon, stars. And at that point I frequently drum, after I get to that point. So the sun, moon, stars, I feel the sensation in the middle of my head, the crown chakra. But I wait as I drum 'til I can feel energy at the back of my head. And I don't know quite what this is about, exactly. But that's what

happens. That moves up. And when I can feel that energy sort of open, then I imagine myself moving through a tree-covered avenue that moves out into a meadow. And across the meadow two steps that move up to the waterfall, where the water is coming down right beside where I turn. And the waterfall moves in this direction with kind of cliff walls with moss on both sides. And the waterfall at the end. And usually the woman who was in the waterfall pool is waiting for me. She now helps care for various young parts of myself that sometimes have gotten in the way in the form of complexes. So she helps keep them contained and feeling more secure. So she's usually there to greet me. And then I go in behind the waterfall to a large kind of cave room where Rosie is. And Rosie sits coiled. Not always usually these days, but initially she was coiled around a red stone. It kind of glowed, like a jewel of some kind. But frequently, when I'm doing the longer sessions, I go each morning and talk to her just where she is in the cave. And then come back out and walk with the wise woman down the stairs and back to the avenue. And we talk briefly and work out our relationship with what is going to happen that day.

MS: What is the relation of the wise woman to Rosie?

J1: She just happens to be the person in the meadow, in one portion of the meadow there's a house where these early parts of myself reside. And she has moved out of the waterfall pool to be the caretaker of these children so I can move away from the complexes, so to speak, and do my work as a whole adult. And so I'm very appreciative of her. And she was a wise old woman. We're getting to be close to the same age now. [laughs] But I think she's still older than I am. And she's asking for more, more active ways that she can work with me. But this has been a very important piece that she's offered for years now. Um...So, I work with Rosie just briefly talking about the day, each day. But when I do the longer meditation she winds herself around my arm and we go out another opening in this cave into, basically the middle world, the shamanic middle world. There's a series of things that have come along in my imaginations over the years and a small room off to one side with a lot of small snakes. There's snakes hanging from trees as we go out, and then we go through a kind of crowded area to a set of rocks, where snakes sun themselves where it's sunny. And Rosie likes to be there. So I let her wind herself off my arm. And there's a place in the rocks for me to sit so that we're at about eye level. And then we can have this conversation. Then I put down my drum and write. And I write initially the question came through me, so the first response will be Rosie's. But her response is to that question. And then any response I have on down. So it's a conversation that takes place over two, three, four pages. And then we stop and she stays there to sun herself for a little longer and

comes back when she wants to. Or I bring her back to her location in the cave.

MS: And is your sense that between sessions Rosie just stays there?

J1: Well, she is staying there in terms of me visually. But she's also in this room sometimes.

MS: And does she work with anybody else, or just with you in particular?

J1: Well, she's, there's one analysand that she's been particularly helpful to, because he's the most in need of her assistance.

MS: But she's working through you in service of the analysand?

J1: She is, but the things she's taught him he can call on at any time. So he can call on the yellow light. She also has taught a kind of shielding of negative energy that initially she taught me. I taught him. And he can call on her to help him shield at any time. So, but she's not his ally. She's mine. And he's clear about that.

MS: And nobody else has her as their direct ally.

J1: No. And won't.

MS: I wondering if at point during our conversation that your inner guidance was operating here. If you've drawn upon Rosie in responding to my questions. And if so, can you try asking *her*, or while being in connection with her, articulate what inner guidance itself is? If she herself were to respond to this question, "What *is* inner guidance?"

J1: OK, just a second. [Closes eyes, head level with shoulders; pauses for 20 seconds] Basically, all she said is, "It's you and me. It's between us. What happens between us."

MS: You and me, or you and Rosie?

J1: No, me and Rosie. That's what she has to say.

MS: And if you were to ask her what that conversation is in service of? What her inner guidance to you is in service of?

J1: [Closes eyes, head level with shoulders; pauses for 10 seconds] Healing. Healing. Yeah. Not just mine, but the work I do.

MS: And was Rosie in the room with us today in general in responding to my questions?

J1: Yes. Sometimes more...At least, sometimes *I* was more aware of her presence.

MS: Thank you for being so generous with your time. I hope I didn't cause a breathless interlude in your afternoon! [laughs]

J1: [laughs] No, no it feels good. It was great to talk. I appreciate that you're doing this.

Interview with Jungian Practitioner # 2 [J2]

MS: Given that my general question is, “What has your lived experience of inner guidance been like and how does it make sense within your understanding of the tradition of Jungian psychology?,” I’m first specifically interested in how you originally came to locate or identify this source or process of what I’m calling “inner guidance” in your life?

J2: Well, it started with my dreams. And more specifically with a set of four dreams I had that led me into Jungian work. And it deepened near the end of my first analysis, Jungian analysis, with a fellow named [name], a Jungian analyst in [place], when I started doing active imagination, which is a particular, oh, technique, developed by Jung for engaging the unconscious. Almost as if you’re dreaming, but while you’re awake. And so I started then with active imagination. I continued after that. That was, wow, how many years ago was that? The dreams, the four dreams, were about 30 years ago. And the active imagination started in about 1981. So that’s 26 years ago. And I’ve been continuing the active imagination since. And, [laughs] I would say that both through the dream work and through the active imagination, that’s what I would call inner guidance.

MS: Were there instances in your childhood when you located or identified this source or process of inner guidance?

J2: No, I can’t say there were. I did dream, but the dreams were not, I didn’t see them as providing inner guidance that way.

MS: So these four dreams later had a totally different flavor and significance for you then.

J2: They did. Absolutely. They were very different. They were of an archetypal nature. And they were four dreams. One dream after the next, four nights in a row. And they were very different from anything I’d experienced before. And it was the experience of those dreams that led me to search for literature and find Jung’s work on dreams, which came closest to capturing the spirit of what I had encountered in dream.

MS: So before you had these dreams you were not steeped at all in the Jungian literature.

J2: Not at all. Far from it. [laughs] My background was really more in experimental psychology and measurement theory. I did my

doctorate with [name] at [university name] in an esoteric area of measurement theory. The [name of assessment instrument]. You may not have heard of it. But it's a classic that [name] came up with. And my job was to find a way of analyzing data flowing from that methodological approach. That was my doctoral dissertation. All Monte Carlo simulation on a computer mainframe. We didn't have personal computers back then. But at the time I had the four dreams I was at the [university name] in a tenure track position in the medical school. And I was doing primarily research and statistical work and I had these four dreams. They changed my life completely. Then I moved in a more clinical direction and prepared to do my own analysis. And to go to Zurich for my analytic training.

MS: And that new direction was basically as a result of these dreams?

J2: Exactly. And a number of my colleagues at [university name] thought I'd had some kind of breakdown. Because here I was giving up this tenured position [laughs] and going on what they saw as this wild goose chase.

MS: But for you it was more breakthrough than breakdown.

J2: It was a breakthrough, yes. That's a good way of putting it.

MS: Would you mind telling me the nature of these dreams?

J2: Ah, I don't know you well enough to go into them.

MS: Well, as far as the catalyzing effect upon your life of these particular dreams, do you have any sense of why then?

J2: Why then? I don't. They just materialized. Let's see now. I was 30, I was 32 years old at the time I had the dreams. That's a little early for a mid-life transition. I don't know exactly why I had them then. I just did. And they were rather, um...I will say this. I don't if you've ever read Esther Harding's book, Women's Mysteries? She comes very close to capturing a large part of what I experienced in the dreams. They involved the moon. And she was a Jungian analyst and a psychiatrist who worked very closely with Jung, and in this book she describes things that are very similar to what I experienced in the dreams.

MS: Did you come across her book serendipitously?

J2: No, no. I was advised by [name] to get a hold of the book and read the book after he heard me talk about the four dreams, describe them and report them then.

MS: And so looking back, in retrospect, there don't seem to be any unique circumstances that surrounded their inception?

J2: Not at all. And I thought about that a lot. Nothing of why then. I don't know. It's a mystery to me. [laughs] I don't know. There were no precipitating factors. But I'm glad I had them then. It was a good time for me to reorient my life. And it was a good thing to do, going to Switzerland. I was able to make use of my background in research and statistics to get a position at the university of Zurich in bio-statistics. So I was one of the few foreigners at that time who... There were many at the Jung Institute in Zurich, but at that time there were 400 students overall and over a hundred were Americans. And I was maybe the only American to have a work permit. So my background served me very well in Zurich. I was able to earn money on that basis; that helped. But my experiences in analysis and in the training at the Institute were quite different. It was the opposite of what I was encountering at the University of Zurich.

MS: And so putting aside the *content* of these dreams, would you say your fundamental perspective or approach to your life's journey shifted afterwards?

J2: Absolutely.

MS: And can you describe what that shift was like for you?

J2: Well, I was on my way to becoming a tenured professor at [university name] in, believe it or not, obstetrics and gynecology. [laughs] That was my home department at [university name]. And without any clinical praxis whatsoever. And yes, I switched into not only clinical work, but Jungian work. I could call that quite a massive shift. Certainly [name], my dissertation advisor, was very disconcerted about where I was heading. Although he came to terms with it. So did [university name]. I left and I went to Zurich for three years and I did my analytic training. And then I came back. And I'd done my internship in clinical psychology at [university name] while I was a faculty member. And I was allowed to keep my faculty position, my salary while I was doing my internship, which was really a gift. And um... After I completed my internship and I let people know I was going to Zurich, the head of the training program, who was a psychiatrist in the psychiatry department -- the clinical psychology internship was housed in the psychiatry department at [university name] -- a fellow named [name] wanted to rescind the certificate. Because the idea, this was at a time in the late 70's, the training at [university name] was very psychoanalytic. Although [well-known psychologist] was there, there were a number of people there who were not psychoanalytic, who had moved beyond it. [Well-known

psychologist] was one. But that didn't happen often. And then after I left and came back, my mentor at [university name], [name], [laughs] another psychiatrist who had hired me originally, he had, when I told him I was going to Zurich, he said, "Why do you want to study at an institute founded by an anti-Semite and schizophrenic?" [laughs] I said, "Gee, I'd never heard that before." He said, "Oh, I know all about Jung. My wife was raised in Switzerland." And I said, "Well, when I go to the Jung Institute I'm going to wave my Jewish flag and see what happens." And so I came back after I finished my training in Switzerland, I met with [name] and I told him my experiences in Switzerland. And he helped me get reappointed and promoted at [university name]. [laughs] So I was one of the first Jungians to be on an Ivy League faculty. As a matter of fact, I don't know if there are any. There might be one. [Name] might be at [university name], he wasn't there for a while. But for a while I was the only Jungian analyst on the faculty of an Ivy League medical school. Or clinical psychology program.

MS: Interesting.

J2: It was. It was very interesting. So in a way, I made a big departure from what seemed like my track, but then it turned out to be the right path for me. And others, who had been very skeptical and unaccepting at first, came around. I was following my inner guide.

MS: What was that experience like for you? After the sudden onset of your dreams, were you tuning into a new kind of internal compass?

J2: I was.

MS: What was that experience like?

J2: Well, it was scary. I mean, here was something, I had never been trained to tune into like this before. I mean, I had always been outer directed, you know. [sighs] And I was good at being outer directed. And I was able to succeed at being outer directed. [laughs] But now I was starting to tune into something else. And at first there weren't many reinforcements for [laughs] following my inner guide. To the contrary. But that changed with time and I found a way of blunting the inner guide's...I learned there are times when I had to be skeptical about the inner guidance too. I mean, it wasn't helpful to just follow it *blindly*. That it had to be more of a dialogue. And it had to be, I mean, in the final analysis, the real responsibility rested with my ego position, if I can use that term, of my conscious awareness. That's where the decisions, I had to make the decisions from that standpoint. But the inner guide became a very trusted ally along the path. I think that's the best way to put it. And that's still evolving.

MS: That's still evolving. So that inner guide is separate from this ego-based awareness.

J2: Oh absolutely, yes.

MS: And I hear you saying there's a dialogic aspect between the inner guidance and the outer guidance.

J2: Yes.

MS: And that at first there was this radical new experience of trusting the inner, and over time reconciling that with how you were directed before, with the outer. And that negotiation became very important, finding a middle way.

J2: Yes, absolutely.

MS: And before we get to this dialectical process or negotiation... That pure sense where you were going solely by the new inner guide, what was that like? How was that manifesting for you?

J2: As I said, it was scary at first. It was, I knew I had to pay attention to it, and luckily...

MS: What was the *it*?

J2: There were two parts to the *it*. One was the dreams. And really listening to the dreams. And I learned to do that through my work. [name] played a very pivotal role for me. He wasn't my first analyst. I had been in a Freudian analysis, with a guy named Jules [name], it was a disaster, seven years earlier. So I was really shy about going through an analytic process again. But [name] was very good and he handled me very well. He was exactly what I needed. A very gentle guy. And he created a very safe space -- we Jungians call it a *temenos* -- a good holding environment. So I guess in a way learning to trust *him* and learning to trust the space, I opened myself up more to the inner process, to the inner guide. And, as I said, I started this active imagination as I was finishing my analysis, with getting ready to go to Zurich for my training. And I will say this about the active imagination: there has always been a figure I've been in dialogue with in the active imagination. In the beginning it was an eagle and it was a talking eagle. You know, one of the, I don't know if you're familiar with Marie Louise von Franz, but one of the things she says about fairy tales is, this is one of the main rules, when the animal speaks, listen! [laughs] So the eagle spoke and I listened. And we had quite a dialogue. And over the years the eagle has transformed into more of a human

image. It's not really a human, but it's assumed more of a human image. And I'm in dialogue with that figure almost every day.

MS: As far as the inception or the original manifestation of this eagle, was the eagle in the dream content?

J2: No, the eagle was not. As a matter of fact, the active imagination did not start with any dream content. [Name] had a huge sand tray in his office.

MS: So if I understand, the active imagination started literally in the context of your work with [name].

J2: It *did*. It was in an analytic session and it started, he said to me, because we'd talked about doing active imagination. And I'd said, "I'd like to see what this is like." We'd been working three or four times a week for several years, which is unusual for a classical Jungian analysis. I mean the frequency. And it was *good*, it was... We were going very deep and I wanted to see what active imagination was like, and he said, "Well, let's start with the sand tray. You know, there are some figures and create whatever you want." And I did. And the active imagination flowed out of that sand tray work. And it was, yes, I did this for several sessions. I would continue the active imagination in [name]'s presence. And that felt safe. And [name] has always been a very trusted figure for me personally. And it was only after that that I started doing it on my own.

MS: And the eagle became a very trusted figure. And as you said, there was evolution in your relationship. Was this eagle originally a sand tray figure?

J2: It was. For the life of me I can't remember it. But yes. I can't remember what it looked like, though. [laughs] In outer reality.

MS: In outer reality do you remember this figure calling to you in some way? Or what was that first encounter like in the outer realm?

J2: Yes, it did. I mean, I felt pulled to it in some form or another. Yes.

MS: And if I understand, in your repeated encounters or physical dialogues with this figure in multiple sessions, that was the genesis for this figure to start manifesting more in the imaginal realm for you.

J2: Actually, it manifested in the imaginal realm very quickly. Even in the first session. I moved very quickly from the outer, from the sand play, into the imaginal realm. So it left the sand tray even before the end of that session. And it continued in the imaginal

realm. It was almost a sort of meditation that I was doing in [name]'s presence. And I was reporting on the meditation in real time. And of course, he just sat there. He didn't interpret and...It just unfolded.

MS: And so coming back...And please let me know if at any time the language that I'm using for your experience is not appropriate for your experience.

J2: That's fine.

MS: Because the language that I'm using is just a scaffolding for your unique experience.

J2: OK.

MS: But did this eagle manifest in your awareness as a guide figure? Was this the role that it assumed?

J2: Eventually it did. I mean, it was a very unusual eagle. I remember it had emerald eyes. Not emerald-like eyes. It's eyes were emeralds. [laughs] And there was something very unusual... [laughs] You know, it was a talking eagle. There was something very unusual about it. And...And it was located at the top of a lighthouse and I had to row a boat and climb up the outside of the lighthouse to get to the eagle. But then once I was with the eagle we always met in the same location. And we just continued the dialogue in that place. Yes, I would say it became clear that it was a wise eagle. [laughs] Yes.

MS: And what would the wisdom of the eagle seem to be in service of for you?

J2: My own development and growth. Yes. It seemed to know things that pertained to, I hate to use this expression, my individuation process. And I was willing to entertain what the eagle had to say. I never felt imposed upon. It was a most circumspect eagle.

MS: As for "individuation process," what feels off about that?

J2: Nothing. It's almost hackneyed, for a Jungian analyst to use that term. [laughs]

MS: Oh. And so when you say it was in service of your own growth or development, towards what?

J2: Remember now, this all started as I was getting ready to leave for Zurich for my analytic training. And the eagle was sort of preparing me for that journey. It was something I could take away

from my analysis with [name]. And that's the way active imagination was originally to be used. It's used differently now by many people. They use it very early in the analytic process in different ways; but Jung meant it as a method for the analysand to begin using at the end of the analysis in order to become less dependent upon the analyst. To take a...psychological method, if you will, to use on one's own. And that's what I did. And it served as a sort of transitional process for me as I left [name] and then went to Zurich and started with new analysts in Zurich. And that was a major change in my life, going to a foreign country and starting there and leaving my position at [university name]. My outer life was really in quite a state of flux as I was going through all of this. And trying to get a work permit, which I did, and all of these other things. And the eagle was always there. Steadfast. [laughs]

MS: And then in the course of all of these external changing relationships, this was a consistent internal one.

J2: Absolutely.

MS: And you mentioned the *physical* characteristics of this eagle shifted over time. How about the act of engagement with the eagle, the process of or flavor of your dialogic exchange? What did that feel like originally and how did that change over time?

J2: Uh...In the beginning the eagle tended to have more to say. [laughs] And over time it became, *I* had more to say. And it seemed to, and especially as it transformed, it went through...as it became less of an eagle and more of a human figure, um...it seemed more interested in...being a receptive guide. Being receptive to *me*. There was much less *commentary* from the eagle. Now, if I had a particular issue...now, I'm talking about trends, over many *years*! Now, what it started in 81 and it's now 2007, so it's been 26 years that this has been going on. But the trend has been in that direction. If I was going through a particularly difficult situation and I needed support...Of course don't get me wrong, I still turn to people in the outer world for support. Sometimes to my dismay, [laughs] as to what I get back! But the eagle, or the figure, now is usually right on target. I've found over many years of experience that maybe I can count the number of trusted and advisors on one hand, I've learned, who I can really trust. [Name] is still one of them, after all these years. That's a good feeling. Yes, it's become, the figure's become more receptive and more, hmm...*empathic*. And more...hmm...what's the right word? Encouraging, that's not quite the right word...more...it embodies what Jung called *pistis*. It means a trusting heart. The eagle, and the figure now, embodies the trusting heart. And I *feel* that. It's more the *felt* experience as I'm in dialogue with the eagle.

MS: It's interesting, the synchronicity with [name] and [word].

J2: Oh, absolutely. There are many synchronicities around [name].

MS: So initially the eagle had more commentary. Was this commentary of a didactic flavor, initially?

J2: In a way, yeah. In the very beginning, yes. It had more of a didactic delivery and it almost sounded *bombastic* at times.

MS: And this quality, did it seem to be in response to your asking for more didactic guidance?

J2: No. No, no, no, no, no, no. The receptivity came later, that came later. No, no, no. It seemed to be more didactic in the beginning, that's a good way of putting it.

MS: Without any kind of supplication on your part, it would just download information, unbidden.

J2: Yes. And you know, I would respond to it and so on. But yes. And that changed over time. It never does that anymore. Maybe I've had an influence on *it*. [laughs] Why not?

MS: And in changing from this more didactic quality of commentary to a more empathic and receptive heart quality, did this seem to be mirrored by the physical changes from bird to human?

J2: It did, it did. That was a part of it. Yes. It also seemed to be deepened by my own experiences in, um...serving as an analyst to other people. So the outer did influence the inner, too. It went both ways. Yes.

MS: We might have covered this, but has inner guidance taken different forms or ways of showing itself in your life? And obviously, right away you said there were dreams. And then there was this active imagination process. And these were the two primary modalities, right? Have the dreams continued to play a role?

J2: Oh, absolutely, they *do*. And oftentimes I will take, what I typically do, when I wake up in the morning, is I write down my dreams first. And then I engage in the active imagination with, I'll call it "the eagle," just for ease of presentation. And [laughs] um...and sometimes I'll talk about the dream and analyze the dream with the eagle. Yes, the dreams play a very important role. And the dreams have been at the...[sighs]...OK...they've served as the basis for important life decisions I've made. And sure, they inform decisions

I'm making. I look for them, look to them, for guidance. Absolutely. But again, that doesn't mean I follow them blindly.

MS: You mentioned that discernment process.

J2: Exactly, yes.

MS: How do you know that you can trust in this source or process? And this seems to have to do with discriminating or discerning between authentic and false confidence in relation to trusting in your guidance. Both with the dream work and also the eagle dialogue. How does this come into play for you?

J2: Well, I mean, how can you trust anything? [laughs] You eventually do, through *experience*, I think.

MS: This is part of the core of my inquiry. How do we know what to trust?

J2: Absolutely. And I know what to trust through my *experience*. With a person or process or an inner guide. Over *time*, the person or process or inner guide has *proven* to me that it or he or she or them is trustworthy. I don't put it other than that.

MS: What are the criteria by which you assess trustworthiness as an end result?

J2: Well...Does the other seem to have my best interests at heart? That's part of it. And that's a big question. I mean, we're not talking about just narrow interest. Sometimes it's a broader...uh...alright. Let me talk about one other piece I didn't, and this may help a little. Oh, this is complicated in a way...In my work with [name], as a result...OK...This goes back a little. I'm Jewish. I went to a military school as a child, [school name], through high school. And I was the only Jewish plebe in my company of 88 cadets. And I was known as "little Jew dog" for the first year, plebe year. It was bad. I mean, it was really bad. And the school... the official religion of the school was high Episcopal. And we had to go to vesper service twice a week and Sunday services. And my mother's father had been a cantor, a chazzan, a singer. And my mother gave me singing lessons. So I sang [laughs] in the choir at [school name]. I was the only Jew in the choir. And I ran into all sorts of problems around that. I was finally forced to quit the choir, by the chaplain. And...Anyway, I made it through [school name] and I was successful at [school name]. I had, what Freud called, identified with the aggressor. And I learned to hate the Jewish part of myself at [school name]. I was an officer. I was the highest ranking Jew at [name] by the time I graduated. And I did well academically and so on. But I started with [name], [name] had been raised Episcopal,

Episcopalian. This was another synchronicity, and he helped me to heal that part. And a part of what we worked on and was...As much as anything, it was a function of my dream work and the inner guidance. Not the active imagination, because that came later. But I would say that the centerpiece of my work with [name] was around my name. My name hasn't always been [name]. It's always been [last name]. [Last name] is my surname. But I ended up changing my name. And I worked on my name. And it's a way of embracing the Jewish part of my disowned, the disowned Jewish part of my psyche, basically. [laughs] And...I had to do it with someone who was raised Episcopalian. It's so odd the way this...Although he was a practicing Buddhist at the time. It was a homeopathic cure, so to speak. [laughs] I worked on it, and [first name] and [middle name] and the acronym [initials], and that was a way of respecting...And believe me, at military school you say "[term of address]" all the time, and so the whole thing fit together in an odd way. But, this was all motivated...I didn't enter analysis planning to do this. This came about through my dreams. Through my inner guidance. And let me say that when I finally did change my name, this was another piece, this was another bit of grist for the mill at the [university name], for those who thought I'd gone off the deep end. Because what thirty...Let's see, when I changed my name I was 35. It was 1980...What 35 year old male changes his name? The whole thing they had a hard time dealing with. But, you know, I mention it because that was a fundamental change in my identity. And it came about through my inner guidance, through my dreams. Not the active imagination. It came about before the active imagination. And I had mentioned about my certificate from the clinical training at [university name]. I had to get another. The first certificate was issued to me in my old name, and I had changed my name just after I'd finished my internship at [university name]. So I had to ask for another certificate with my correct name on it, with my new name on it. And they issued it. And I have to give them credit, although several didn't want to do it. And oddly enough, my, as I had no control over this part of it. The name, the court date for my name change, was July 14th, [year]. July 14th is Bastille day. Which was an odd synchronicity. There were many around the name change. That was motivated by the dreams, by the inner guidance. It was something I had to do. And the odd part of it was, I had thought it was all archetypal, and it wasn't. The last piece that I worked on was in early June, [year]. My father had died on [date], [preceding year]. And...In the Jewish religion you often honor the dead person at the one year anniversary. That's usually when the stone is set on the gravesite. And so...What I realized, this was the last piece after going through all the archetypal stuff around [first name], [second name], so on. Of my own personal stuff that I was aware of, the last piece had to do with my father, as we were approaching the one year anniversary of his death. And it came through a dream that his

nickname had been [name comprised of interviewee's first two initials]. His name had been [name]. And the initials of my new name were [initials], which together spells my father's nickname. So by taking on this new name, in a way I'd be honoring my father. And I had to decide whether or not I wanted to do it. And that was not an easy decision, because my father and I had had a problematic relationship. But I decided to do it. And then I told my mother, who was in her late 70's at the time, about my name change. And this piece of it. And she, of course, was missing my father terribly. And she accepted it immediately and never made a mistake with my new name. That came, the name change part, and especially the last piece, came through the inner guidance.

MS: And I'm not sure if this is way off the mark, but what comes to mind is a new chapter of identification with the aggressor, this time your father, but now in a very conscious way.

J2: Oh yes. That was a piece, yes. Yes.

MS: And so getting back to what you said before about the discernment process of being able to trust that an internal or external voice is in service of your best interests... In terms of your best self-interests, self might be taken in a variety of ways, with a variety of scope of identification. Would you say more about that? How to recognize when something is in your best self interest?

J2: Sometimes that's not easy to recognize. My first analysis with [name], that was awful. I don't want to go through it all. But if you Google him, his name, you'll learn all sorts of things about him. He ended up losing his medical license.

MS: And this was in the Freudian paradigm.

J2: Yeah, on the couch three times a week. With [name] it was classical Jungian, face to face. Although we met three or four times a week, which isn't classical Jungian. In analysis with [name], he was the Great Man, he was chair of psychiatry at [university name], he was president of the American Psychiatric Association, he was any number of things. He's won the [name] Award in medicine, you know. He was a *big man* in many ways. And so...and I was just wet behind the ears, I was 25 years old, I had just got my doctorate. What did I know? And it took me a long time, it took me over a year, to realize that I was in the wrong place, working with the wrong person, and this was a destructive process, and I needed to get the hell out of there. Well, I did. I did get out of there. And it wasn't easy, to just get up and go...So in the beginning, I didn't trust myself and I trusted someone, [name], who was not trustworthy...And, um...[long pause] I would say, through trial and error, and that was a big error on my part, I learned to trust. I

became very, I was very *untrusting* after that experience...And, um...[sighs] I don't know. It was him, I think what it was with him, he had all the accoutrements of the Great Man, and I just was undiscerning, if you want to...I mean, I was...in awe of him. And I wasn't, it took me a while to use my critical intellect, which at that point was over-trained, [laughs] given my graduate school education and so on. But then I was able to bring it to bear and look at what was going on. And uh...I had run into that some in graduate school. I'd worked with [name] and [name] was a big man in psychology. He was president of the American Psychological Association, he worked on, he was a real genius. And he had worked on things like, I don't know if this is familiar to you, experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research and things like the [name of assessment instrument]. He had appointments in four or five departments at [university name] and so on. He was a really smart guy. He graduated from [university name]. He and his sister were undergraduates there. He was first in his class, she was second. [laughs] So something was going right in that family, at least academically. He was a very smart guy. One day I was doing a piece of field research for him and we got into this big argument about a particular form of analysis of variance I was going to use for analyzing the data. I was going to confound some of the higher order interactions. And he didn't understand why I was doing this, why we couldn't analyze the third or fourth degree interactions. And so finally after about an hour I said to him, "I don't think you know what you're talking about." He got really embarrassed and flustered and he said, "Well, I never had a course in statistics." And here he was arguing with me the whole time, not admitting to the academic's, what shall we call it, shadow side? Not willing to show that you don't know something. So I could, sometimes, muster the wherewithal to see through things like that. And I never trusted [name] completely after that. I have to say, after that episode, I didn't. I thought, "Why can't you just admit that you don't know this?" Well, what I learned over time was first, to be a little more charitable with people. And secondly, to, through my own reflections on what has transpired between myself and another, between myself and a particular process, or an inner figure, I've learned how to make the discernment. I'm getting better at it.

MS: I'm wondering, you mentioned there has been a developmental aspect in regards to trust.

J2: Yes.

MS: Also, its way of appearing.

J2: Right.

MS: Can you talk about that developmental aspect?

J2: Sure. Well, it went from animal form to human form. It went from more of a bombastic, didactic presentation to more of a receptive, um...*Resonating* presence. Uh...In the beginning, occasionally it would surprise me. [laughs] Or shock me. That never happens anymore. I don't know. It's a different sort of...it's a different sort of relationship. It's, it's...I've changed. It's changed. And our relationship has changed. How it's going to change beyond this I don't know. What else has happened developmentally with the figure?...I feel, I feel...Mmm...you know, Jung had an interesting, he says in several places that we're dreaming all the time. We're just not consciously aware of our dreams. It's almost like, right now the sun is out, it's very bright and we can't see the stars. But they're there, the moon's there. It's all there. And that's Jung's position around dreams. Now around dreams, I'm not consciously aware of dreaming while I'm awake, while I'm talking to you. But I *am*, as time goes, on, I'm more and more, I experience the felt presence of this inner guide. I'll put it this way. In different spiritual traditions...the idea is that as you meditate longer you take the results of the meditation with you into your outer world. There's a transference of results or however you want to think about it. I experience the same thing with the inner guide. It seems to be more insinuated into my life. It's here. If I tune in a little bit I can experience the felt presence of the inner guide. That doesn't mean we're *fused*, it's not that. But I know it's *available*.

MS: It's almost like the threshold between being in and out of dialogue is less and less distinct?

J2: In a way. Yes, in a way. In a way. And remember, the dialogue has changed. What I experience more in quote "dialogue" with it is more receptivity and a sense of *pistis*, the trusting heart and the resonance. And I can experience that sometimes when I'm working with, and I have a tough session, I tune into that, during the difficult part of the session. And that helps, that helps to facilitate my therapeutic process with the person I'm engaged with.

MS: So the dialogue does not have to be verbal.

J2: No.

MS: When I hear resonance I'm almost getting a somatic connotation.

J2: I would say that's true. It's becoming less and less verbal. I'm verbal with the figure. It's less verbal with me.

MS: Interesting. And in terms of this figure being summoned or being available in facilitating a difficult process with the client...In service

of what, or whom, does it manifest in that relational space with a client?

J2: If we're hitting what appears to be an impasse. Somehow by tuning in to this part I'm able to negotiate the impasses.

MS: And what might the impasse be?

J2: Oh, any number of things.

MS: But an impasse to what?

J2: Oh, misunderstanding between us. A um...an emotional, what shall we call it? An emotional...[long pause, sigh] Maybe an empathic failure on my part? Something of that, it could be that. It could be the patient or the analyst and feeling ungrounded and uncentered. And by tuning into that I guess I become more grounded and it helps, it gets passed through the feelings between the two of us, yeah.

MS: So in summoning or having the evocation experience of this guide in a relational space, it seems to be in service of empathic attunement. And perhaps in service of the person you're sitting with being more in touch with *their* internal guidance?

J2: Could be, yes. Absolutely. Why not?

MS: And when I mentioned the developmental aspect of your inner guidance, you went right to the active imagination space. How about the dream space? You've said that there's a dialogue between your dream content and the act of active imagination.

J2: Right, I bring it in.

MS: And how about the dream content itself? Has there been a developmental aspect to either the content or in terms of how you relate to the content?

J2: I would say there has been on both scores. I've seen a change over the years in my, you know, how to put it? In the beginning, especially when I was starting, [laughs] OK, this is funny in a way. When I started my work with [name] on the couch, the first session was face to face and he gave me the basic rule of psychoanalysis: "Get on the couch and say whatever's on your mind" So I got on the couch. Between that session and the session on the couch, I had a dream. And the dream was really short, but overwhelming. I didn't know the word *numinous* at the time. I was a researcher. What did I know about this stuff? So I got on the couch and I told him the dream right away. And he said, "Sir, you're being

irresponsible." I said, "Why am I being irresponsible? How am I being irresponsible?" He said, "You know why and you know how." I said, "I know why and I don't know how." I said, "I don't know. Please tell me." And there was total silence. Thereafter, every time I had a dream, he said, "Sir, you're being irresponsible." So I'm on the couch and he's behind me and it's like Yahweh is making these pronouncements. It was unbelievable. Meanwhile, I learned, I'm not stupid, not to talk about dreams. But my dreams, and I didn't know the terms for all of this, they became much more archetypal and I couldn't talk about them. I was supposed to talk about whatever's on my mind [laughs], but every time, here's a catch 22! [laughs] So I, in a way I had to learn to *distrust* my inner guide. That's what he was teaching me. And it turns out, he had me read his autobiography, I've got it up there [points to office bookshelf]. And in his autobiography he says he doesn't believe in dream analysis. And he believes that people who talk about dreams are being irresponsible. So it was shortly after that that I left analysis with him. Kind of odd for a Freudian analysis to not deal with dreams. I mean, Freud certainly did.

MS: And to prescribe an autobiography. [laughs]

J2: There you go. Well that's a whole other story, right. [laughs] So I had to learn to trust my dreams again. Which I did with [name]. And, you know, in the beginning a lot of my dreams had to do with my parental complexes, with traumas of youth and so on, and my dreams are very different now. They're oriented more, I'm working on a book now about dying and death, it's called [title pertaining to personal evolution and death]. And I'm focused much more on the last part of my life and on what that means. Occasionally I'll have a dream that speaks to what's going on with one of my patients or analysands. Occasionally that will happen. But mostly, it's a very different, it means it's not, my dreams are not oriented to the past. In a way they're, they're not pointing toward birth, they're pointing towards death now. And they're very different. And not death in that, I don't mean that in a... What's the word I want?.. They have more of a spiritual quality in them than they used to have.

MS: Not as fatalistic?

J2: I mean, we're all going to die, and that is part of what we're born in to. But there's more meaning attached to it.

MS: Not the dread aspect, perhaps.

J2: Yes, the dread aspect I've worked through.

MS: That's handy. [laughs]

J2: It's handy. And that's part of what I'm talking about in this book. But, Jung, if you really read him carefully, I don't know if you've read, Memories, Dreams, Reflections. His last chapter is on death and his final thoughts. I mean, he gets into this. And Frau Jaffe, she was one of my analysts in Zurich, she did Memories, Dreams Reflections with Jung, she was an amazing woman. I'm lucky in that once I got into my work with Jungians, I've experienced excellent analysts. I've found good people to work with. Anyway, um...Jung speaks, he divides analysis into two parts, reductive and prospective. And I think my dreams earlier on were of the reductive sort. I had to deal with the unfinished business of childhood and parents and so on. And in a way, working through the name change represented a big step along the way, getting that piece/peace with my father and working it through. Now, oddly enough, in the research area, when I was doing this research project, I just want to mention this one thing because it's somewhat related. I worked with a very well-known Freudian analyst, we collaborated, [name]. He used to be chair of psychiatry at [university name]. And he knew [name]. And he's very different from [name] but he also doesn't believe in dreams. But I'm trying to, I'm sort of educating him along the way. And I'm opening his eyes to Jung. He used to be very anti-Jungian. And even though Jung's name...[Name] was president of the International Psychoanalytic Association, and he says whenever he goes to the international headquarters he sees Jung's name. Jung was the first president of the International Psychoanalytic Association. And he sees Jung's name up there. And I gave him Jung's biography, Jung: a Biography by Deirdre Bair. He learned about Jung as a researcher. He didn't know that. And he's been more open to the Jungian approach along the way. I don't think he's open to dreams, though I keep telling him how important dreams are. [laughs] But yes, it's changed. And my dreams now are more oriented towards the last mountain to climb, as it were. Coming, you know, really approaching death and dealing with it. Yes.

MS: And you were just speaking tangentially about this aspect of external teachers, but part of the discernment aspect of inner guidance I'm interested in is with forms of outer guidance. And I'm wondering how your reliance upon inner guidance has worked in conjunction with the outer forms of guidance, both in terms of teachers and with also from being steeped in the literature or tradition of Jungian psychology. Meaning, has there been a dialectical quality between those two?

J2: Yeah, I mean, there's a to and fro. There's a give and take. I tend to process what I experience in the outer world with my inner guide. But as I said, the inner guide has fewer and fewer comments of a verbal sort to make. It's more, it's becoming more the felt presence.

MS: Does this inner guide tend to use the voice more as a...As a sort of means of intervention, when you're living less in alignment with your true purpose?

J2: Yes. I mean, occasionally. Yeah, there can be a warning, the way a friend can give a warning. Sure, that can happen. Yes.

MS: I'm wondering if sometimes there's a tension or a balancing act between your inner guidance and your outer forms of guidance, what teachers or traditions or the literature has said. And if so, can you give any examples of the struggle or harmony in your life between the outer and the inner?

J2: Um...Well, for me, one of the issues has been reconciling my Jewishness. Um...[long pause]. What's the right word? [laughs] With my *psychological* orientation. And that's always a continuing process for me. Starting in military school. [laughs] And it's continued. When I was in Zurich I wrote my thesis on Kabbalah, on a particular aspect of it. There's an image in the Hebrew Bible of the circumcised heart and that image captured me and I amplified it and worked on it from a Kabbalistic and Jungian perspective. So I've been working on it, and at one point the head of my selection committee in Zurich, the most powerful person there, who determined whether or not I was admitted in the program, promoted and certified, wondered whether or not I should be a Rabbi instead of a Jungian analyst. I had to set him straight. [laughs] That wasn't my agenda. [laughs] So there is that. And I would say one part of Kabbalah I like a lot is the emphasis on the inner process, the inner work. My figure at times, I refer to my inner guide as "Adam Kadmon." I don't know if you're familiar with that. In Kabbalah there are two main images. One is of a man. It involves the ten sephira, circles, that are central to Kabbalistic thinking. And one way of arranging those ten is in the form of the tree of life. And the other is in the form of Adam Kadmon. Adam Kadmon means "primordial man" in Hebrew. And, you know, I'm still dealing with that issue. I'm not an *observant* Jew. I am Jewish by culture and there are many parts of the belief system, especially Kabbalistic belief system, that really appeal to me. I'm certainly with my name change not trying to avoid my Jewish identity. As I said, the name represents the embrace of my self-respect as a Jew. Which I lost at [name]. And it's odd, because the impetus for the name change came from my inner guide. Well, at that time through my dreams. So it's still an issue. When I die I will not be buried in a Jewish cemetery I will not be buried, I'll be cremated, which according to the Orthodox is taboo. So I try to find...My path is a psychological path. It's not a religious path. It's a psychological path. As Frau Jaffe put it, she put it well, the psychological path of individuation is ultimately a way of preparing for death. It's my way. I mean, I've really embraced the Jungian approach. Not just as

Jung writes about it. But as I've experienced it, embodied through people like [name] and people like Frau Jaffe and others, who have nurtured my inner process, my inner guide, who've helped me to gain more trust in my inner guide, my inner process. I mean, I've come to really *trust*. [name] has always proven to be trustworthy. And he's now in his late 80's. We stay in touch. Frau Jaffe died in 1991. She was 88 at the time. Very close. And he was raised Episcopal, she was raised Jewish. And unfortunately she encountered Hitler's Germany during the early 1930's and had to flee. And luckily she was able to flee. But there *is* that tension. I mean, I'm still trying to sort that out. I'm more and more following along a path that feels right for me.

MS: You've talked about your relationship with your inner guidance as developing or evolving.

J2: Yes.

MS: I'm wondering if the strength or presence of that experience varies over time. And if so, how so?

J2: [long sigh] I'm sure it does, but gee...Yes, I mean, as I said, it's becoming more embodied. It's becoming...My experience is that it occurs not only when I'm focused on it, in the morning after I've written down my dreams and I'm engaged, I'm into a space of active imagination, into this imaginal space with my inner guide. But it feels as though, and I almost never miss, I would say this last year maybe I missed my morning ritual two or three times. I mean, it's, and it's not because it feels, it's...When I miss it I really miss it. I *miss* the experience of it. Usually there's a good reason that I'm not able to do it...

MS: How long does it usually take?

J2: 20 minutes. 20 minutes to half an hour. Sometimes less. Rarely longer.

MS: Both to write and to dialogue with your guide.

J2: Yes. We're doing it, it's happening concurrently. I mean, I'm writing as we're dialoguing.

MS: How do you respond to those times when your inner guidance is less available? Or when you're not feeling in touch with it?

J2: That doesn't happen. That doesn't...I mean, it feels more and more available, more and more in touch. That doesn't happen. Even when I don't have the dialogue, the explicit imaginal experience in the morning, I still have a felt presence. I still experience that. Yes.

MS: Is your experience of inner guidance consistent with what you have read about its role within Jungian psychology? And if it differs, how so?

J2: Well, yes and no. Yes, up to a point it is. But, you know, no one's...As far as I know, I mean I could be wrong. I mean, Jung talked about his experience with Philemon early in his life, in his career. But then there's not much talk about his experiences after that. From what I can see. And so it's hard for me to answer that. I don't know the answer to that. I know what *my* experience is. But this isn't something that people ordinarily share. So I don't know, it would be interesting to do a study if people would talk about it, to really see what the various experiences are. I don't know.

MS: I'm wondering specifically how your inner guidance work helps you to prioritize, or decide upon, or begin, or embody specific practices or decisions or ways of being in the world. As in making choices.

J2: Yes. These are things I reflect on with my inner guide on an almost daily basis. So it helps. I mean, let me put it this way: before I started this process, before I started the process of analysis, I was much less reflective about myself and my life and my decision-making than I am now. Um...I've become much more reflective. And this is, Jung talks about this, this is another sort of psychological process, and I think it's deepened through the work with the inner guide. And in the way in that I'm doing it, in which I sort of review these things with my inner guide on a daily basis. Including my dreams. So I mean, yes, it's enabled me, this whole dialogue with the inner guide has enabled me to become more reflective with that.

MS: Are you in a place in your life right now where you're trying to make any decisions, or are you going through something that could serve as an example, a decision or something, in which this process is helping to inform your decision-making?

J2: Um...let's see.. what decisions am I willing to talk about? [laughs] Uh, sure. I mean, it is and it does and there are some important decisions coming along. Luckily all is well in my personal life. And as I said, I would say right now the most important decisions have to do with my book, the writing I'm doing around my book. How to approach this, what to include, what not to include. And this is something I review with my inner guide. Yes. Yes. That's the most important thing coming up. I'm hoping to have the book finished by July 14th, Bastille Day, [year]. [laughs]

MS: [laughs] A real bookend.

J2: Yes.

MS: I'm wondering if you would feel comfortable sharing what this dialogic process experientially is like for you, being in relationship, in kind of a real-time sense, with this guide. How does this manifest for you? If you were to give an experiential, heuristic, or phenomenological description of your lived sense of this dynamic.

J2: Usually I start it off. And I'll report on a dream, or on the events of the previous day. And then the inner guide will come back with something and then I'll go on from there. And then the guide will come back with something. Often, if you look at the transcript of one of our dialogues, I would say about 70 or 80 percent of it is coming from me. And...um...I feel after I've gone through this process with the inner guide, I feel...More *ordered*. I don't know how...Are you familiar with Jung's story about the Rainmaker? This is one of Jung's favorite stories. He admonished all of us who graduated from the Jung Institute in Zurich to share this story at the beginning of our lectures. Sometimes I do. The story was conveyed to him from Wilhelm, who translated the I Ching, Richard Wilhelm. The story goes like this. Supposedly it's true. Got me! In China there was a really bad drought, and it was so bad that finally the citizens of this province decided to call in the Rainmaker from the distant province. They called him in. He came in their presence, he was this little old, frail looking grey haired man. And he looked at them and he said, "Give me my own hut and leave me alone!" And so they gave him a hut and didn't bring him any food, water, nothing for three days and three nights. Then on the morning of the fourth day the storm clouds gathered. There was an incredible storm. Not just rain, but hail and lightning. I mean, no one had seen anything like it. The drought was broken. So the people couldn't *believe* it! They said, "Oh my God, the Rainmaker *did* this." So they went to get the Rainmaker to praise him. And they got him out and he could see what had happened, and they said, "What did you do?" And he said, "I didn't do anything." He said, "I came into this place and I saw that everyone was out of order and was throwing *me* out of order. And I had to retreat to a place and find my own order again. And that's what I did." And he said, "I found my own order and then the rains came on their own." That's one of Jung's favorite stories. In a way I experience something like that after I have a session with the inner guide. I feel more ordered and able. If I've have a bad dream or an unsettling dream, or sometimes at night, unprocessed stuff from the previous day, the day residue, however you want to think about it, comes through and can be unsettling. I'm processing this stuff and finding my order, finding my way of being in the Tao, however you want to think about it. And being more centered, more grounded.

MS: And I almost hear you implying that there's a sort of holographic aspect to this. That an internal order will help evoke an order in the configuration of external things also.

J2: They can, yes. Often they do. Sometimes, anyway. [laughs]

MS: I'm wondering if you noticed at any time during our interview together if inner guidance was operating? And if you've drawn upon your sources of guidance in response to my questions?

J2: Sure. There were times when I did experience it. Again, it was the felt presence. Not verbal. And not even visual. But more of this felt presence.

MS: Can you describe at all what this experience is like? That presence, if you were to try to give a, you know, again, like a heuristic account of what this is like when it's not verbal?

J2: Sure. It's several feelings at different times. I mean, one feeling of...my heart opening more. One feeling of um...[long pause] deep comfort. It's along those lines. It's hard to put some of this into words because these are nonverbal experiences. And they're not visual, which is odd. They're mostly kinesthetic.

MS: So an opening of the heart, a deep comfort...

J2: Yeah. Along those lines.

MS: And yet you've maintained, or this guidance has maintained, a semblance of an eagle, or has transformed into more of a human form. So you've maintained the visual identified construct still?

J2: Yes. I no longer see it as the eagle. It's been years since I've seen...As a matter of fact, today is the first time I remembered the eagle in I don't remember how long. In years.

MS: So you've been using the eagle just as a short-hand for me. But how do you consider or engage visually when it's not just as the kinesthetic experience in this *current* manifestation of guide. What is that presence for you now?

J2: More and more looking like a primordial man. Yes. And that, hmm.. it's hard to describe him exactly. Because he has a protean aspect to him.

MS: Is there a mercurial aspect?

J2: No, not mercurial. No, no, it isn't that. And there's no trickster aspect to him. None that I've ever experienced. At least that, I

would say that when he was the eagle there was more of the trickster. I mean, things would happen unexpectedly and there were surprises, and there hasn't been any of that.

MS: No more shocking qualities.

J2: No more shocking quality, no.

MS: What is the tone of manifestation or voice or whatever from this protean current manifestation? There's not a trickster element, not a shocking element, what is the...

J2: Deep acceptance. Almost, you know, and here's where gender gets in the way. Um...almost the qualities that Neumann talks about with respect to the Great Mother, in a way. In a way. But it isn't really maternal. It's hard to describe it. It's just very deep acceptance. Yes.

MS: And is there currently a sense of evolution to this protean guide?

J2: I don't know. I'll have to let you know. [laughs] I don't know. It just seems to be getting deeper and deeper.

MS: Deeper and deeper. The acceptance is getting deeper and deeper?

J2: And the feeling is a deeper and deeper feeling. Yes. It's hard to go beyond that.

MS: I'm wondering, if you do make use of a certain strategy of attuning to your inner guidance, which you've told me you have, could I invite you right now to use that strategy to answer, "What is inner guidance?"

J2: Hmm...It's a mystery to me. I don't know what it is, exactly. I mean, I...What are dreams? I mean, where do dreams come from? It's...I would, I think I will have a better idea of the answer to that question in the years to come. I don't know yet what it is exactly.

MS: I'm wondering if you make use of an explicit, sort of, maybe not formal, because this seems to be something which pervades your being. But if you were to make use of a dialogue right now with me, if you're comfortable, with your guide, just to yourself, or however feels comfortable, in answering what is inner guidance from that space of inner guidance *itself*?

J2: Ahh. Let me see. I see what you're getting at. OK. [Closes eyes and tilts head slightly upwards. Silent for 15 seconds.] Um, the response I got to the question was that inner guidance is a reflection of the truest and deepest reality. And what that means, [laughs] I'll have

to experience. I *am* experiencing it, as time goes on. I have a feeling I won't know the answer completely until I'm on the threshold of my death.

MS: Would you mind if we tried that one more time to inquire further what this truest and deepest reality is in service of?

J2: [Closes eyes with head tilted slightly upwards in silence for 10 seconds.] No answer. I guess it's before my time. This happens sometimes. I'm not ready.

MS: So the lack of response means that the time is not yet ripe for any response?

J2: That's been my experience.

MS: And no need to push it.

J2: No pushing. That's something else I've learned. And we're getting near the end of our time.

MS: Thank you very much.

J2: You're welcome. I'll be eager to see what you've come up with and to read your dissertation once it's completed.

Addendum:

[Following the interview, the interviewee excised a large part of his commentary upon his trials and tribulations with the San Francisco Jung Institute, citing his desire to attempt to heal his relations with the Institute on a personal and professional level. In place of what he has taken away, he had added the following dream.]

J2: My initial dream in Jungian analysis with [name] has also provided inner guidance. I dreamt that I was in a house alone. The dream was in black and white. Suddenly a green snail materialized out of nowhere. Poof! It started to grow in size. I became frightened. I went outside to see whether there was anybody there to help me. There was not. I came back inside. The green snail continued to grow. I ran up the stairs. The snail followed me, slowly, slowly. I ran into a room at the stop of the stairs and slammed the door shut. The snail followed. Then, my consciousness, my I-ness, transferred to the snail, so that I was seeing out of the eyes of the snail. The door opened. I saw my body suspended. A giant blade had severed my head completely, which was off to the side. The green snail and I turned around and moved off, slowly, slowly. End of dream. The snail has become my soul animal, the carrier of my conscious

awareness. I had this dream experience before I knew anything about the San Francisco Jung Institute, let alone the Institute's logo: four snails going around in a circle. There is a strong archetypal connection between the Institute and me, a clear meaningful coincidence. I am one of the snails, as it were. I know that at the deepest level, I belong as a member of the Institute, no matter what the vagaries and vicissitudes of my political experiences on a personal level.