

The Promise of Meditation I
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[This transcript begins with the group coming out of meditation.]

That meditation is the foundation of an awakened life.

Trungpa Rinpoche used to talk about how taking up meditation was announcing your intention to be more realistic about life. So, the first question is, “In what sense realistic?”

Usually or sometimes we can think of meditation as being about moving from a busy, noisy, chattery state of being into a quiet, more peaceful state of being. There’s something true about that, and it can be very pleasant. But that’s not really the deep promise of meditation. Underneath both quiet and noise, busyness and peace, there is a stillness out of which all of it arises, out of which quiet and noise and all the rest of it come. In our meditation we can touch that place of stillness inside ourselves. When we do that, we’re touching the stillness that is also at the foundation of the universe itself.

There’s a koan that says, “The stone woman gives birth in the middle of the night.” That’s this place of stillness, where everything is in potential; anything can happen and things rise and fall within that stillness without disturbing it essentially. But there’s no way to make a separation between what’s rising and falling and the stillness itself. It has a steady state and it has a functioning. That functioning is the rising and falling of all things.

One of the great old Chinese teachers described this as being the *samadhi* of the universe itself, the deep meditation state of the universe itself. So that’s what all of this is, it’s a deep meditation state that includes everything. He assured us that for countless eons, no one has fallen out of the samadhi of the universe, which I find consoling. [laughter] “Within it we wear clothes and eat food, talk together and reply.” That’s the big picture — the thing we’re being realistic about in Trungpa’s formulations — that is so. There is this vast field of potential in which everything rises and falls all the time. That stillness is a dynamic stillness. It’s a stillness in which stuff is always happening.

Another of the old Chinese teachers, who was a contemporary of Ma's, said, "Your absolute mind is completely still and entirely whole, and its ability to respond is limitless." So your essential mind, which is down there at the stillness, is whole, nothing missing; still, because it's there; and has an ability to respond that's limitless.

We think about having to do stuff, and we think about having to generate that out of our will. When we think of it as being generated by our will, we think of effort, energy, priorities, where we want to spend our time and energy, and what we want to do.

This is something else. This is the place where our stillness, the stillness of our heart-minds, meets the vast stillness of the universe. That's what meditation can do. It can take us to that place where we discover we are continuous with the universe. What is inside us is continuous with what is outside us. Where we connect is in that stillness. From that place there's no effort, no energy; it's not our will making it happen. We're just letting the vast stillness flood into our own stillness, and out our hands into the world.

That's the first thing : our ability to find that place where our stillness meets the stillness of the universe, and to know that it's continuous and the same thing.

There's a second question, because the koan tradition doesn't leave it there. (There are some traditions in which you go, find that place, sit down, and that's it. You're done. It's nice down there. Not so much with us.) The next question is, "What do you do with that?" It's not enough to just experience it.

One of the names we use for really knowing that place completely is realization. Part of realization is understanding and experiencing that for yourself. But the other meaning of realization is to make it real, to make it actual in the world. We have to *do* something with that. That's where the koans come in. You go down. You get still. You feel yourself connected to the universe, and then the koans come in to stir things up. What's it like from that place? What's it like to take up a question in that place?

In more ordinary terms, what's it like if you and I are talking, and we're talking stillness to stillness? I'm listening for your stillness, you're listening for mine, and we're speaking to that, back and forth. How is that different from regular banter, the usual kind of conversation? How do we come into situations leading with our stillness, looking for the stillness in the situation, and finding ways to connect with that? It's a different way to experience things, to

come into relationship with things, if we link into that stillness, between our individual selves and the universe.

Now we're talking about linking the other way, between our individual selves and the stillness in others. The linking goes on in all directions. If we think about that stillness as a vast field of potential, and we think about the fact that nothing ever falls out of it, then it must be true, if we're all there in that field, that from the very beginning everything is connected to everything else. There's nothing separate, you can't fall out, you can't be separated away from it. The fundamental nature of things is to be related, to be connected. When we look with our stillness for the stillness in others, we're looking for those connections that are essential and pre-existing, already there. We don't have to create them. We don't have to invent them. We just have to remember that they exist. We have to rediscover them.

One of the ways that the old Chinese teachers talked about realization, or enlightenment, or awakening, or seeing your self-nature, all of those things, is as becoming intimate. That was another synonym. They said we don't have to perform an operation to become intimate; the intimacy already exists in every situation, and our job is to liberate it. That's a pretty nice job : to go into any situation, to feel for the intimacy that's already there, and then to liberate it in the situation.

I just talked about the various names for awakening. We have a lot of synonyms for more or less the same thing. I have a new colleague who's a Kabbalist rabbi. In Kabbala you're working with language all the time. He said this beautiful thing to me : in any language, if you have a lot of synonyms for the same thing, you're talking about something that that culture understands really well because they have a lot of words for it. There's a differentiated and subtle understanding of that thing. And I thought, *Yeah, we have a lot of words for awakening.* That's very cool. In some ways that is profoundly our legacy — to understand that, to know about it and care about it. And to have developed experiences of it that are subtle and differentiated. There's something about acknowledging that that's the legacy of this tradition and that's not where we end up, but where we *are*, where we're walking right now. It's important to me to emphasize that. Okay, that's the bottom level of things. Any comments or questions before I go on?

Q1 : I think we learn sometimes that we're suffering, in our childhood. Can you speak to that?

JIS : I'll just back up and say something that feels important. There can be a default assumption in the spiritual life that having a human heart-mind is a problem that meditation or other spiritual practices are meant to fix. *This* is a fundamentally different relationship than that. This is saying that having a human heart-mind is an amazing thing. We don't have to fix it. We just have to learn how to be it fully, to refine it; to develop our relationship with it; to do as much as we can with it. It's not a journey of renunciation or paring down or filing off the rough edges. It's a journey of feeling things right out to the edges, feeling our heart-minds right out to the edges, and experiencing what that's like.

For some reason that's mysterious to me but obviously the case, we come in, we feel a separation, we feel the alienation, and we spend our whole lives trying to get back from that — and that's the point. Somehow we have to differentiate, individuate, separate, and then we have to come back from that into the wholeness, having had that experience. I can't say why that's so, but I don't think it's a problem. I think it's essentially part of it.

So here we all are having decided, *Okay, let's come back, let's swing back and see what it's like now.*

Q2 : You mentioned other words for awakening, and intimacy is one of those. I wonder if you might speak more about what you see as those words in our culture.

JIS : I mentioned 'realization' as having a dual aspect of understanding something and making it real in the world. That feels important. 'Enlightenment' I don't use very much because it's so squishy. It can mean pretty much anything you want it to mean. It's obscured behind a cloud of projection, longing, and despair. It doesn't seem very useful. Although it'd be nice to revive it somehow. When I speak of awakening I'm not talking about something that's a bolt from the blue, an instantaneous kind of experience. Rather it is a process that goes on for a whole lifetime. You're awakening from the moment you're born till the moment you die, and probably after that. You're on a journey of awakening. It's constantly changing, constantly unfolding. At any particular point things will be different. It's not the idea that something's going to come from left field and solve all our problems and save us from having

to live our lives and make everything radiant all the time. It's a slow unfolding that involves the work over the course of a lifetime.

Probably my favorite of the old Chinese terms is 'becoming intimate.' It's pretty gorgeous. Then the question becomes, "What keeps us from becoming intimate?" What are the obstacles and the constructions and the stuff that gets in the way, so that we end up not having a direct experience of what's actually happening, but we're having an experience of what we *think* is happening? We've stepped into that second order where we're conversing with ourselves about our opinions about what's going on rather than experiencing what's going on.

This is one of the things Trungpa Rinpoche meant when he said meditation is about becoming more realistic. We clear away those obstacles, we notice our habits of mind and heart. We notice the things we do that keep us separated, and over time let them go so that we have a more immediate and direct relationship with things. That's intimacy. No stuff in between. Just, *Yeah, here I am*. No longer observing but now participating in this amazing *samadhi* of the universe.

Q3 : Do you think it's important to make an effort to get past this idea that we're going somewhere — that there's a goal of an ultimate awakening?

JIS : Let's refine the idea a little. It's important to have aspirations. In Buddhism it's called *bodhicitta*, which is the desire to be enlightened so you can save all beings. A small task, but why not? [laughter] It's important to have that sense of aspiration. If we go back to something we were talking about in the *Mahabharata* weekend, what's it like to imagine having objectless devotion? What's it like to have a sense of tremendous devotion without a particular object, which is to say, devotion that encompasses everything all the time? What's it like to have an objectless gratitude — just a gratitude for what is so?

You can apply the same thing here : What's it like to have a goalless aspiration? To put everything you have into the willingness to wake up without having an idea of what it looks like? As I say all the time, and I really mean this, the most destructive part of having an idea of what it's going to be like is that your idea is always smaller than the thing itself. And you're limiting yourself. If it doesn't match the idea you throw it away, and then you don't realize you've just thrown it away. It's always bigger.

Q3 : There's aspiring to something, but then it can turn into always aspiring. What should the approach be?

JIS : You don't know that it's always going to be the aspiring. That's an opinion. So, if you're aspiring now, aspire now. That's all you have to do. You don't have to worry about the future. Let the future take care of itself. If you aspire wholeheartedly, right now, that's what you can do. But without the opinion that it will always be thus. Just 'now,' That's all we got.

Q4 : You talked about the removal of will in finding stillness. It starts this chain in my mind about what it is to bless or to curse. When I think about what it is when we want to bless or curse something, it's like trying to take that formlessness and give it our form, our will, and apply our will to it because we think it's good or we think it's bad; that we should change it somehow. The removal of will made me understand something about skillful means, that there's not a will involved in it. That seemed important to me and I wonder if you could elaborate and help me become intimate with that.

JIS : Okay, talk about the place of will in creative process.

Q4 : There is an "I'm gonna start something." There is a coming to it and saying, "Today I'm going to start a major sculpture"; or "I'm nearing the time when this work is ready to become." I start pushing things out of the way so that I can make the space to make that happen. I think that's a gesture of will. But then when it actually comes to building the thing, then it becomes collaboration. I have a sketch, but that has to go pretty quickly or I'll overmaster it. It becomes a dead thing; it won't have a life.

JIS : Even in the beginning when you're setting up, which feels like an act of will, it's also an act of surrender. It's also saying, "I'm going to clear the space so something can happen that I can't see yet." So you clear the space and you wait. And something happens. As you say, it's a collaboration between the impulse in you and the force that is much bigger than that. *That's* the place where your stillness meets the stillness of the universe. Something arises in your heart-mind that you want to express and somehow that connects up to what the world wants to express and when that connects up that's gorgeous. You can't go wrong with that. There you have a moment when what you want is what the world wants. That's really powerful. Can you look for that in other parts of your life — those moments when what you want is what the world wants, and it's so simple?

Q4 : That's what struck me about what you said. I thought, that's so much more simple, if I can pull my will out, instead of 'make it right, say the right thing.' That's the over-mastering of the sculpture where I've got the sketch and I know what it should look like so I'm going to keep driving that home. Of course I know that with the clay that doesn't work.

Q5 : It doesn't work even with me, not an artist, not creating, but with anything in life. Every time I try to impose a structure on things, it usually doesn't work nearly as well as times when I'm just going along and somehow start doing something almost unconsciously. (It is conscious, but it's not like I say, "Today I'm going to ...") I'm just in the midst of doing something and suddenly it becomes something that is totally in the flow and it's absolutely perfect. It was not on the list — it's not even close to the list — and yet it was the perfect thing to do. I'd like to be able to be in that space all the time and to throw the list away. But I don't seem to be able to do that.

JIS : Let's refine that a bit. You don't have to throw the list away. You just have to change what you think the list is for. The list is for not getting to the end of the list. [laughter]

Q6 : Then that makes me a winner every day!

JIS : I'm sorry, but you'll have to give that up. [laughter] We don't play a piece of music in order to get to the end of the piece of music, right? So what if our list were like a piece of music. It was an occasion for focus and concentration. An occasion for mustering ourselves and bringing our awareness to things so that it could be completely exploded by the unexpected rushing in. The list is valuable because it focuses us. It concentrates us. It brings our awareness to more or less one point — so that all of that can be disrupted.

Q5 : So just meditate on that list every morning.

JIS : Don't think of the point of it as having to get to the bottom of it. The point is to live with that kind of focus and concentration. Then notice what happens. Notice the unexpected, the thing not on the list that the list makes possible. You don't have to throw away the list. The list makes it possible in a way. If you don't have the list you're diffuse and all over the place. That can be lovely too.

Q5 : I don't know. I've never been in that. [laughter]

Q7 : I'm there most of the time.

Q8 : I just had a realization. Some time ago I made a change in three relationships. It was all a part of the same change : to change the nature of those three relationships. It really worked for one. For the other two it didn't. It just occurred to me that it may still be in process. I don't have to keep on imposing will on it. I just have to pay attention.

JIS : That's nice, thank you.

Q9 : Does will have a place in what we do?

JIS : Yeah, it gets us out of bed in the morning. It has certain important and limited functions. The problem is we tend to give it way too much space and free range.

Q10 : The idea of delusions keeps coming to mind. I wonder how you feel about that piece of terminology? It's kind of a traditional translation, really, in the Dharma. But maybe it's too judgmental?

JIS : We had a big conversation in the koan salon about what to use instead. A delusion is fundamentally something that replaces what's actually happening with a construct about what's happening; with an opinion or a story or a belief about what's happening, rather than the thing itself. We played with things like *substitution* and *separation*. Those feel more accurate. The point is you move away from first order experience with what's actually happening to your own story or opinion about what's happening, and that becomes the primary relationship, which is pretty useless. How do you climb out of the delusion and back into the first order experience?

Q10 : At some neurological level, we don't have any other option except to integrate sensory information with constructs, and that's how we make sense. That seems to me like the fundamental paradox — that that's the *only* way we can be in the world. And, if you're a purist in the traditional form, it's delusional because it always modifies the primary experience. How do we work with that? I guess we just try to stay close to the bone. Stay with the experience. Feed low on the *skandhas* : form, sensation, perception, consciousness, etc.

Q11 : What comes to my mind is embrace it and watch it.

Q10 : Yeah. Maybe that's what you were saying about it being a surrender process more than a will process, to clear away the space to do the creative activity. To surrender, constantly. Maybe that's the way to work with the constructs.

JIS : You're touching on something important, which, if you take it seriously, affects your whole way of being in the world. We never have more than a best guess; that's all we've ever got. There's no certainty. If you take that on and you think in every moment *This is my best guess about what's happening*, it's really quite humbling and freeing in a way. Everything we do is a mistake. Everything we choose is a mistake. There's no way, in an absolute sense, to get it right. So what's the best mistake? What's the most beautiful mistake? What's the mistake we care about the most? When you think of it that way, what comes along naturally is that we have to hold it provisionally. We can't hold onto it as the truth of the world. It's your best guess, you hold it provisionally, it's subject to revision, it's subject to experience changing it. That's a different relationship to the world. Because you're involved in a process and a relationship all the time. What you see, think, and feel about it is going to shift based on what actually happens, based on new data.

Q10 : So the substitution terminology is that. If you don't flat out substitute your construct for what's happening, but you hold it provisionally, you're constantly ready to modify based on new information all the time, and that's a different way of being.

JIS : Yeah. Call it a delusion and you're saying fundamentally there's something about being a human being that's dangerous because we don't see things clearly. Call it a best guess subject to new information and suddenly it's not a problem anymore, it's a process; it's the way we are.

Q5 : Something that I'm beginning to notice in my life is, the more I work with koans, they bring that up for me. You're faced with a story that happened 1500 years ago with people that are long dead, and it makes no sense. You have a big cultural difference, so there's parts that you don't understand because you don't understand the cultural differences that the story happened in and then it never gives you all the facts. You just get a little glimpse. Then you just sit and work with it and work with it. The first thing I find myself doing is making up back-stories about it. I fill in all the details. I realize after a while I could make up twenty different stories about this one story. Then somehow it creeps into my life with something that I'm doing and it teaches me to look at my own experience differently. *Oh, is this really what's going on?* Maybe it's not; maybe there's something else. It's interesting. I never thought a koan would take me there.

JIS : That's great. Not just connecting with that stillness, but working with it, with a koan, things begin to get more spacious. There's more air. They're not so solid. We're not in a wrestling match with them all the time. That's emptiness. That's a big concept, *shunyata*, that's emptiness functioning in our daily lives when things get more spacious, less certain, there are more possibilities suddenly. All of that is emptiness coming in.

Q5 : And it doesn't stop you from being able to function in the world. It's interesting if you think about it. It would seem that if you're in a situation where you don't really know, then how would you act? But somehow it doesn't work like that at all. You can still function quite well.

JIS : Yeah. Because, in fact, you're taking your cues from the situation, rather than your assumptions about the situation.

Q11 : I operate from my heart. I feel like that's the closest I've come to moving in the world that I have no preconception of. That helps me to move in that stillness / emptiness. That's what I have to work with.

JIS : It's interesting to me that in Chinese, the word *xin* means both heart and mind, which is why I say heart-mind. For them there was no separation between those two things. Not that they were the same thing, but that they were connected. A major system in our being is the heart-mind. When you have those two together, you have a wise heart, because you have a heart informed by emptiness, informed by insight and the mind. And you have a warm mind, because you have a mind informed by the heart. It's interesting to think of that as one thing and how they operate together, and not to split them into 'my head says one thing but my heart says another.' What's a wise heart; what's a warm mind? What's that like?

I would like to take what was being said about how koans work in our lives and go back into meditation, and this time bring a koan in. It's a simple one : there's a monk who's on a journey and he comes to a temple and talks to the teacher. The teacher asks him what he's up to and he says, "I'm on pilgrimage." The teacher asks, "What's it like being on pilgrimage?" The monk says, "I don't know." The teacher says, "Not knowing is most intimate."

How could that be? How could doing something and not being sure or certain about why you're doing it, not having a big idea about it, how could that be the *most* intimate way to be with something?

Let's do ten more minutes of meditation. Once you're fairly settled, bring in "Not knowing is most intimate." You can just say it a few times to yourself and let it go, notice what happens, like dropping a stone into a still pool and watching the ripples. Notice what goes on in your mind, what kind of thoughts, images, feelings, physical sensations arise. If you start to trip out on it then come back to breathing and get centered again. Then ask again, What is this 'not knowing is most intimate'?, and just notice what happens.

[10 minutes of meditation]

JIS : So what about 'not knowing is most intimate?'

Q10 : The spring bird song was absolutely fabulous [in the background]. They were cutting through my knowing. It was all just birds. I feel so intimate with all of you. I really felt an intimacy. The whole thing was just right there for me. It was a deep meditation because of the birds. I've thought about this koan a bunch, but maybe the new thing is that the not knowing brings us not only into intimacy with the situation — a clearer connection to the specific configuration that things are right now — but also with the people. Letting go of the constructs, letting them be as provisional as possible, going through the whole 'surrender, surrender' it's like then I can really be there with you in a way that I can't otherwise because the other stuff becomes a block.

JIS : Ikkyu's enlightenment poem is one of my favorite things in the literature. He wrote :

The moment that crow laughed, a hearer rose up
from the ordinary dust. In this morning's sunshine,
an illuminated face sings.

Isn't that gorgeous? So, "The moment that crow laughed, a hearer rose up from the ordinary dust." That's what happens when we let the world call us, it calls from us a hearer — someone who truly hears the laughter of a crow, or the clatter of pots in the kitchen. So from the ordinary dust, from daily life, a hearer rises up immediately in response to the laughter of

the crow. “In this morning’s sunshine, an illuminated face sings.” What’s that illuminated face? What’s it made of? It’s not the bird. It’s not the person. It’s all of it. That whole event becomes the illuminated face singing. And not knowing is the door into that. He heard the crow because he wasn’t busy knowing.

Q5 : So we heard the birds. I guess you didn’t hear those giants walking across the roof. [laughter] What came to me was that you all became much more interesting once I felt that I don’t know. I came today with preconceptions. *What’s going to happen?* To drop all that for “I don’t know,” just I don’t know!

JIS : It’s a relief.

Q5 : It is.

Q12 : It seems to produce a bit of anxiety in me. I *never* know. Coming to something like this I never have any idea, especially coming to retreat. My whole thing starts to unravel and come apart before it. All that’s left underneath it is a low-level anxiety about not having an idea. It’s a hard space for me to sit with. I’m very accustomed to having my ideas.

I got the birds. The robin doing his thing? Gorgeous. *This is my nest. I love my nest.* And I love that. It was so intimate and lovely, it cut right through that anxiety. But a lot of the other times when I don’t know, I’m still knowing something. It’s very rare that I get there. Even when most of it has fallen away, there’s still this discomfort with having lost the other stuff.

JIS : I think you’re right. You’re not ‘not knowing’ all the way. There’s still something you know, which is there’s something anxious about that state. Have you done inquiry into that anxiety?

Q12 : Just now. I wasn’t even quite aware that there was the anxiety until I said, ‘Wait, there’s still something.’

JIS : What’s the quality of it? What’s it like?

Q12 : It’s in my heart and it’s tightness, tension. A bit restless.

JIS : Do you work with your breath with that? Putting your breath into your heart?

Q12 : That seems like a great place to go with that. The robin chopped it and it went away. Now that I recognize it I see that it’s there right now.

JIS : That’s what we get. We get the robin chopping it sometimes and sometimes we get, “What is this?” Those are the two modes. Breathe. Notice your breath as it passes through your heart. Notice what it feels like : open, closed, tight, non-existent, whatever, and let your

breath go down all the way through your heart, and see if you can put it into your belly and back out again. Notice any thoughts, sensations, images that arise as your breath is going through your heart. Pay attention to that and do some inquiry on that as long as it feels alive. You can mix that with thinking of your breath as a warming presence as it passes through your heart. See what happens. Is it a warm, spacious breeze? See what you can find out about that anxiety. It might be different than you think it is. The basic all-purpose inquiry is, "What is this?" You get an image or feeling and ask, "What is this?"

Q13 : I felt a lot of the immediate loveliness as soon as the quiet started, but I always seem to start with suffering, and I struggle with that. I have a bit of a Buddhist responsibility as the greeter and the facilitator for a meditation group at the cancer center. It's also my profession to deal with people who are suffering. And of course, the suffering that matters most to me is my own. I found 'you don't know' to be a comfort, though I twisted it a bit to become 'you never know.' A lot of what I try to do for myself and my patients and the people at the cancer center is to say, 'You can control your suffering.' So much of my own suffering is my own creation. But you can get in control. That's what I tell kids, patients, etc. It seems like I'm always thinking about that, and what I'm often trying to teach them from what little bit I've learned from this process is to be in control rather than lose control. So that's what I'm struggling with.

JIS : Great. Thank you. Let's take a little example of the difference between a question, a doubt, a pain, and suffering. If you say, [resigned] 'You never know,' the charge on that is suffering. Take the charge off and you've got, [lighthearted] 'You never know.' That's not suffering. That might be doubt, it might be a question, but it's not suffering.

Q11 : It could be hope.

JIS : It could be. There is pain and doubt and anger and fear and all of that. Then suffering is adding the thought, 'I don't want to be feeling this.' That's the difference between pain and suffering. Something happens. It's painful. That's life. It is thus. Something happens, it's painful, and we say, "I really don't want to be feeling this way," that's suffering.

I'm interested in the word 'controlling.' I don't know that you can control that, but you sure can notice it and you sure can do inquiry into it. And you sure can climb back down out of the suffering, which is the charge we add to the feeling itself, which might be pain or doubt or sorrow or whatever it is. My tendency would be to step back into the moment before the

suffering got added, rather than trying to have a relationship with or control the suffering. It's hopeless to try to control that. Not so hopeless to say, "Wait, just before that, what was happening? Just before that I was feeling pain. I can do that." That's stepping back into that first order experience of what's actually happening rather than our opinion about what's happening, which is 'pain sucks.' So think about that. Can you step back into the moment just before the suffering constellated, just before you had an idea that you didn't want to be feeling what you're feeling, or shouldn't be feeling what you're feeling?

That's the first thing. Then the second thing is to look at the spin you put on things. Try saying the same thing without the charge on it. "Ya never know." Say it without the charge, without the opinion about what it means to never know. Just sit with 'you never know.' See what happens with that.

Q5 : Along those same lines, what came to my mind was the things that I can't stand. I try to change the way I look at the things I can't stand. Now that you say what you just said, it's because I don't put so much tone to them. I just say, *Oh yeah, I can't stand that.* I think one day it will become less and less so that things don't have to be unbearable. There doesn't have to be that suffering along with not being able to stand it.

JIS : Yes. So then to get back to the question about delusion, if we're contrasting delusion and reality, delusions will always look for supporting evidence for themselves. *It's like this, it's always been like this. Look! See! There it is again! It always happens.* When you're in that mode, that's delusion. When you're in a deconstructing mode, like, *I can't stand it, but maybe it's not unbearable,* you've let some air in. You've let some space in. That's a move toward reality. That's a fundamental diagnostic between the two. Is it looking for supporting evidence? Is it looking to blow itself up? If it's looking to blow itself up, that's a move toward reality and a more open heart.

Q14 : I had a thought that I was on an interstate with all kinds of branches, but all the signs were spray painted white. There's no more directions.

JIS : What was that like? What was the feeling of that?

Q14 : I don't know where to go. But it's okay. I can go anywhere now. On the delusion thing — yesterday was so terribly windy here, and then the electricity went out. I was trying to do my *rakusu* and sitting near the window so I could see because there was no light. White

trash bags were flying all around my house and they looked like beautiful birds. That's a delusion, but a nice delusion.

JIS : Anything else about "Not knowing is most intimate?"

Q11 : Yes. When I was thirteen I had a traumatic experience and ran out of my house and into a field cursing God. Then the clouds parted and a shaft of light came down. It encircled me in warm heat. It lifted me up and shot me up into space. I remember thinking about love. There's nothing that can resist love. It was like my spirit filled the whole universe. It happened in an instant and then was gone. I lived with that the rest of my life. I guess what I'm getting at is that yes, we can't know anything, but our heart can reach out in the stillness and darkness and we can be intimate. I love that word you use. So that's what came to my mind.

JIS : Just so.