

Freedom's Body III  
Joan Sutherland, Roshi  
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Good Evening, bodhisattvas. How's everybody doing?

We've been talking about the body of awakening, freedom's body. Last night we were speaking about how the self is something that exists partly within ourselves and partly not within ourselves. It partakes of the larger world and of the vastness, and so it isn't bounded by our skin. It is continuous with the world, continuous beyond that, and through that with the vastness itself. So if that's the case then there must be activities of that self which are also not bounded by our internal worlds. And if there is an embodiment of awakening, there must also be an enactment of awakening, by which I mean there must be something we do to turn our awakening into matter, to turn our awakening into the stuff of everyday life. It's lovely, it's about day six on a retreat like this. We're a roomful of bodhisattvas radiating light and goodness. But it's not enough. That's the embodiment, maybe, of awakening, but the next thing to do, maybe, is to enact it, to make it real.

It probably won't come as a great shock to hear that within this, as in the embodiment of awakening, there is an aspect of form and an aspect of emptiness as well. So the enactment of awakening takes place at the intersection of the form aspect of this activity and the empty aspect of this activity, just as our self (in the way we have been speaking about) takes place at that same intersection.

So the form aspect of the enactment of awakening : One of the ways the form aspect has been referred to in traditional Buddhism is as the Brahma Viharas, which are the heavenly dwelling places or the boundless states of heart and mind. In a way-too-brief summary, the four Brahma Viharas, the four heavenly and boundless states of the heart-mind are : lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

I'll talk about each one of those but in a nutshell :

Lovingkindness is like love but it's a specific kind and form of love. It's a love that doesn't require anything to fulfill itself, doesn't require a payback. It's what we might call non-attached love.

Compassion is the ability to understand the suffering of others, to be concerned about the suffering of others, and to wish to act to end that suffering. The traditional formulation of compassion is that the thing that you're moved to do in compassion is not to comfort the person who is suffering but to end the sources of their suffering, both internal and external. Whatever it is inside of them that's causing them to suffer, whatever circumstances in the world that are causing suffering, your desire and impulse is to end the causes of suffering, not necessarily to comfort the person. That's a different idea than what we usually think of as compassion, which we is as sympathy, a kind of fellow-feeling for someone.

Sympathetic joy is the ability to take joy in the joy of others, to take delight in the delight and the gladness of other people and things around you, and to take delight and joy in the causes of joy and delight in the world, and to want to support those causes.

Equanimity is talked about as the protector of all the rest. Equanimity is the thing that makes the others possible and in a way guards them. Equanimity is not, again, what our stereotype of it might be. It is not detachment or indifference. In fact, each of the Brahma Viharas is an antidote to a particular poison, and each has what is called a near enemy. A near enemy is the delusion that might be mistaken for the Brahma Vihara, the virtue. So the near enemy of equanimity is detachment or indifference. If we think that it's about detachment or indifference, we've fallen for the near enemy rather than being centered in equanimity itself.

Equanimity is seen as a kind of steadiness. It's true of an ability to hold steady no matter what is going on around you, and also of an impartiality, receiving everything with equality. I'll talk more about them again, but the tremendously important thing is, what do we mean when we say to receive all things equally? It means to receive everything with the same openness, no matter what. That's equanimity — to have the capacity to meet everything with the same openness.

In the Mahayana tradition of which Zen is a part, one of the most important things about the Brahma Viharas is their connection with *bodhichitta*. Bodhichitta is a Sanskrit word usually translated as the desire or motivation to attain enlightenment so that you can work for the enlightenment of all beings. That's true, and it's also true that if the Brahma Viharas are the enactment of awakening in the world — the things you actually do and the attitudes you actually hold — then bodhichitta is our desire, having seen the big picture, the larger view of the vastness. We experience the vastness, that part of our self which has made it to the

vastness, which knows that radiant view of things and wants to enact that immediately in the world. We do that through the Brahma Viharas.

We do that even though we know we are never going to reproduce the radiant world in the material world. That's impossible. We were talking earlier in the week about how the material world is by nature unperfected and incomplete, and that means we get to participate in it, co-create, and dream it on ourselves. So we immediately try to turn our bodhichitta, our larger view, our understanding of the radiance of things, into the matter of the Brahma Viharas, even knowing that we won't get it right; that we're never going to make it perfect; that we are going to fall short; that the world will never be completely radiant – or never *only* radiant is the more accurate way to say it. It's going to be radiant and like a strobe light at the same time. We do that anyway because, having seen the radiant world, our desire is great for it to be as real as possible, as actual as possible, in the material world around us.

I was really happy to find a small passage in the Morning Prayer that you say in Judaism. This is something to say every morning. This little bit goes like this (speaking obviously to God) :

With the light of your countenance,  
With the light that shines from your face,  
You gave us a love of kindness, righteousness, blessing, compassion,  
life and peace.

And to me the most important thing in that is 'the light from your countenance.' When we see the radiant world, that's just another way of saying the light of the face of God, when we see that it gives us a love of kindness, a love of compassion, a love of peace. It's not enough to say we're going to practice toward it, or we have an aspiration toward it, or we think it would be a good idea. It's saying we love it; we should love it, we must love it, it is the natural state of things to love it when we've seen the radiant face of God. So, with the Brahma Viharas we get on with that loving, imperfect as it is, partial as it is, not complete as it is. We just get on with it because it's really important that we do that, and we do it because we love it.

I want to speak of a couple of ways to look at the Brahma Viharas in general, which means the heavenly dwelling places, the *upayanas*, which are most literally translated as the boundlessnesses (say that five times fast, the boundlessnesses). This is this boundless state of heart-mind. And you might hear in that an echo of our own Four Boundless Vows, the four

vows that we make every day, several times a day during retreat, which are completely impossible and we make them anyway. In the same way the Brahma Viharas are boundless. They don't have edges; they don't have limits; they're unconditional. We don't feel lovingkindness or offer compassion to people we like, or in circumstances when it's easy. There are no conditions on it like that. They are without limit. Before we all go *Ughhhh! How am I possibly going to generate limitless quantities of compassion, lovingkindness, sympathetic joy and equanimity?* know that you don't have to.

That's the great thing, because in the Mahayana view, these boundless qualities are the true nature of things. They're already here. They're already all around us. All we have to do is liberate them from whatever situation we're in. What we agree to do is not to be endless generators of these qualities; what we agree to do is to be the people who come into any situation and look for the way to liberate the inherent compassion, lovingkindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity that are in any situation. So we don't have to *make* it or *will* it. We don't have to be *that* good. We don't have to do any of that. We just have to commit ourselves to looking for it everywhere, to encouraging it, to doing what we can to make it available and accessible in the world.

One of the things that's great about that as well is that the Brahma Viharas are not the same as our emotional states. They're much bigger than that. They come from a place outside our own internal landscapes and situations. For example, it is possible to feel anger and compassion at the same time. We have this idea that in order to be compassionate we have to be completely loving, completely open; everything has to be perfect and in place. That's really not true because the compassion, in a sense, doesn't have to do anything with us. You can be really, really angry at someone and still feel compassion for them, because it's not about you or how you feel. You bodhisattvas, which is who you all are, are agreeing to be the occasion for compassion in the situation whether you feel it or not. You are agreeing to act for compassion in a situation. You are agreeing to try to see what the compassionate thing to do is even if you are not completely there, even if you've got a whole bunch of other stuff going on.

It doesn't matter because it's not about you, and that's the nature of the bodhisattva way. It's not about you in the sense of the 'you' that's bounded by your skin, in the sense of the 'you' that feels strong emotions and has big opinions about things. The bodhisattva way is the way of stepping into that 'you' which exists both inside and outside you, which is continuous

with the skin, continuous with the world, and continuous with the vastness. The bodhisattva is the one who knows that about herself. The bodhisattva is the one who knows that about everyone and everything else, and treats everyone and everything else in that way.

SB [Sarah Bender, Sensei] : The bodhisattva is not the person who finally is completely there. It's the person at the moment who is there, *there*.

Q1 : So when you do that, when you enact in that way, at that moment, you're the bodhisattva. It's not like a final state that you achieve and stay in forever?

JIS : Yes, it's a state of being rather than a destination.

Q2 : Always accessible.

JIS : Yeah, it's always accessible no matter how you're feeling. [Laughter] Fortunately, it has nothing to do with how we're feeling. Which also means, selfishly speaking, it can be a way of towing us out of how we're feeling. It's a way of reminding ourselves that there's something bigger than the immediate local turmoil that is going on in ourselves and can change it in an instant. Just to remember that.

SB : And that's not some kind of false manipulation. It's a real change that can happen like that.

JIS : A strange, mysterious, bizarre, radical view of the Mahayana, if you think about how compassion, lovingkindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity are the way things are : *that's* realistic, and when we get stuck in negative, partial, or self-concerned states, we're being unrealistic. Forget nasty, unpleasant, or in pain — unrealistic. We have separated ourselves out from the way things most truly are. That's a radical idea, it really is. So, when we agree to the Brahma Viharas, when we agree to look for them inside ourselves and in the world wherever we are, we're on a search for realism. We're on a search for the truest thing. And we're saying that's what we want to support, that's where we take our stand. We take our stand in that kind of largeness and realism of things.

Okay, so that's the boundless peace, the boundless state of heart-mind. The other way that they are thought of is as the heavenly abodes, heavenly dwelling places. You can see that in what we have just been saying. There is a way in which to commit to the Brahma Viharas is to commit to encouraging heaven, to encourage the light of God's countenance to be visible all

the time for us. There's another local aspect, to bring it back to the personal and particular : We know so well in our own lives that there are gates to heaven and hell around us all the time, and that the gate to heaven or hell can open with a phone call, a conversation, a misstep, a misunderstanding, and *boom*, the gate, one way or the other, flies open.

One of the things that the Brahma Viharas are about for ourselves, the way that the Brahma Viharas reflect on ourselves, is that we understand that there are more things than us acting in the universe. Which is to say there are bad things that happen, there are bad circumstances in the world. There are gates of heaven and hell that open having nothing to do with us. The kind of New Age idea that you completely create your own reality is sickening to me. If that's the way things are, I'm just going to put a bullet through my head right now. Because the thought that I am only alive inside what I can imagine, what I personally can imagine, is horrifying to me. We create the world together. The world is created by all of us, and the trees, the stars, the cars, the dinosaurs, and all of it together. That's what's creating the world. That's what's creating reality.

Do we have an effect on how we experience it? You betcha! And that's where the gates to heaven and hell come in all the time. We can choose to see the heaven of things. We can choose to see the hell of things. But please, we're not responsible for everything that's happening. There are circumstances that cause great suffering and great joy for people over which we have absolutely no control whatsoever. That's part of the condition of being alive, and it seems to me that the idea that you create your own reality in total is a defense, a childish defense, against the fact that there are lots of forces in the world over which we have no control whatsoever. That's life. So, now what? Because that is so, the Brahma Viharas become all the more important because they are a way we can mitigate the most damage, create the most heaven under circumstances that are sometimes very difficult and very painful.

SB : I have to tell you something on that, which is in fact, life wouldn't have made it so far if a single view could prevail.

JIS : What was the first view? That's a great question. What was the first view that set this whole thing in motion? The first organism that had a view ... That's it, we're trapped in some single-celled organism [Laughter]; it's just ramified and gotten worse.

Okay, so an addendum to the rant is that maybe a consequence is that the Brahma Viharas are not sentimental. They're not nice little virtues we should cultivate. It's really hard work, in the face of the partiality and the imperfection of the world, to be the ones – not the only ones, but some of the ones – committed to looking for kindness, compassion, decency, and steadiness. It's hard work and it tests us, because it doesn't necessarily have to do with how we feel.

We might be feeling unhappy, scared, or angry. When we do it anyway despite how we're feeling, when it raises our anger and disappointment, it provides the opportunity for us to purify those feelings. Again we have the sense not of trying to replace our negative states with positive states, but of allowing our commitment to the decent things, the helpful things, the kind things to magnetize and raise up all the places in us that are not feeling decent, kind, or helpful. The *I don't want to do this again, I hate this, I'm exhausted, Stop it, or Get over it!* . We let those be brought to the surface and we let them be purified in the fire of the hard work of the Brahma Viharas, in the fire of our commitment, *anyway*, to lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

I'll just say a few idiosyncratic things about lovingkindness and compassion. If Sarah has something she wants to add, we'll then open it for discussion. The reason I use the word lovingkindness when some people use 'love' to translate *maitreya* or *metta*, which is the Pali word for it, is because lovingkindness is a specific kind of love. It's a caring for another, independent of self-interest and ulterior motive. There are lots of kinds of love that are different from that. That's a pretty good definition of nonattachment. Not that we don't care, but that we care without considering what it's going to get us, what it means for us. And the reason I like to use the kindness part is that the root of *maitreya* or *metta* is a word that means friend.

The Buddha actually talked about lovingkindness as being like the constancy of friendship, that quality of true friendship that is un-deserting (it doesn't desert us). There's an un-deserting, friendly quality to lovingkindness that's important. Also, with lovingkindness and with all of the Brahma Viharas, our feeling and embodying them is not dependent on what the other person is doing or feeling. We feel them regardless. We feel lovingkindness

regardless of what the circumstances are or what the other person is feeling. It's not conditional and it's not the usual kind of exchange we make.

I like to think of lovingkindness as a kind of bridge between the here-and-now world of form and the radiant world of emptiness. It makes me think of a question I've mentioned before that Shimon Peres, Israeli politician or statesman depending on your viewpoint, was once asked. It was like the 798<sup>th</sup> peace thing, maybe, and they asked him if this is finally it, is this the light at the end of the tunnel? And he said, "Hey, we've got the light, what we need is the tunnel." [Laughter] That's what lovingkindness is for me, the tunnel. We have the light. We know what the radiant light looks like and should be like. What we need is the tunnel to get from here to there. The bodhisattva way is the willingness to dig tunnels; the willingness to pick up the shovel and make those bridges, those tunnels of lovingkindness between here and there, between the realms.

Here's a classical, traditional story about lovingkindness. It's one that's told about the Indian teacher Asanga. There is a bit of Buddhist mythology that there is a Buddha of the next age, the Buddha-to-come, and his name is Maitreya – or maybe her name; wouldn't that be wonderful. S/he is connected to lovingkindness and friendship. The sense is that somewhere up in the heavens, the Buddha of the next age is sitting there quietly loving the world. So Asanga decided it would be much better to have Maitreya down in the world actually loving the world from a closer position. So he went off into a cave and he did hard practice for twelve years trying to invoke Maitreya, the Buddha-to-come, into the world. After twelve years of very hard practice, absolutely nothing happened. Not a taste or touch, not a feather's breath of Maitreya. He got discouraged, decided to give it up and walk into town. As he was walking into town from the cave, he came across a dog who had been badly wounded, lying in the street. He was immediately filled with lovingkindness and compassion and went rushing over to see in what way he could help. As soon as he bent down to the dog, what happened? Maitreya appeared. [Laughter]

The sense of the story, the moral of the story, which is pretty obvious, is it's not enough to sit in the cave for twelve years and try to mentally bring Maitreya, lovingkindness, into the world. Maitreya, and this is Sarah's point, is evoked in the world every time we act with compassion, every time we act with lovingkindness. And probably the only way Maitreya is ever going to get into the world is by what we do. We can do that over and over and over



again, and maybe we can do it continuously. That is the only way Maitreya is going to have Maitreya in the world. All of our continual, collective acts of compassion and lovingkindness.

Q4 : It's a beautiful thing to think about, a buddhist split into a million bits ... that sort of chain reaction like marbles on a table.

JIS : It is nice isn't it? Not that unitary figure but just all of the momentums and tendencies, lines of energy running through the world. That's nice.

Q5 : Takes out the waiting part.

JIS : Takes out the waiting part, it sure does. Yeah. We could do it right now. Yes?

[Chuckles]

SB : Maitreya's kinetic energy : you know when you first learned about potential energy sitting up on the shelf? Just give it a little shove and it rolls off and becomes energy.

JIS : We just have to give it the shove.

Okay, and now I'll just say one more thing about compassion. I intimated earlier that we tend to think of compassion as a kind of empathy, and it's true that it is an ability to understand why something might really be hurting somebody else. An ability to really feel that pain or to imagine what it would be like to feel that pain. But in the traditional formulation, that wasn't what compassion was. Compassion was the understanding that people suffer. Now that might seem like a small difference but it can make a really large difference, because if compassion is the understanding that people suffer, you don't have to feel empathy with a person suffering to get that they're suffering, to feel compassion for them. There are people, actions, and situations in the world I have a difficult time empathizing with. It's hard for me to feel my way into what would motivate someone to \_\_\_\_\_, and you can fill in the blank for yourself. It's not natural to me to think that I understand that.

Q5 : Can you define empathy just in terms of compassion?

JIS : That's what I'm trying to do right now. Empathy is the ability to feel what someone else is feeling or to imagine what it must be like to feel that. In the traditional formulation, compassion is something different. It's the deep understanding that beings suffer. So in order to understand that people suffer, you don't have to empathize with the idea that people suffer; you don't have to be able to understand how they are suffering. If someone commits a heinous act, if my compassion depends on my empathizing, I might not be able to do that. But if my

compassion is dependent on my understanding of their suffering, I'm there. I got that. I can do that. So that little difference makes a big kind of difference.

Then we're looking at compassion as a way of understanding how to live in the presence of suffering, both other people's and our own. It's to not turn away from it. And that's a very big thing, a simple thing, developing the ability to live in the presence of suffering. It's important because it makes everything else possible. If we're not fleeing, anything else becomes possible after that.

SB : It's to be *with*. To be with it, not necessarily to feel it, to identify with it, but to be in its company.

JIS : To be in its company. Exactly. Just to stay means that all these other things can happen, whereas to leave cuts off all those possibilities. Even if what happens is *I can't go all the way to completely empathizing with you and your situation. I can go this far or this far or this far because I'm willing to stay*. It's the willingness to stay open over time so that our minds might be changed, that our hearts might be changed. We don't only understand now, we can't get there now, but sometimes compassion is just being willing to stay open to the possibility that I might understand something differently. Something new might happen that might cause me to see it differently. Again, that's the willingness to stay open and have my mind changed.

Here's the last thing I want to say about compassion; it's a companion to what I just said; in one way it might seem contradictory, but I think they're both important : Compassion is the willingness to be pierced. It is the willingness to be pierced by what you see, hear, or understand. Compassion can be bloody and messy because it's also bringing our own passions and deep feelings to the situation. It can also mean that. It can be our willingness to be bloody, muddy, messy, and get down with it.

SB : It's your willingness to offer your best failure.

JIS : Absolutely.

SB : Because it takes all of our best failures to make something happen.

Q5 : Plus you've got to be willing for your own stuff to come up. That will bring a lot of pain and that's why most people want to run away from that.

JIS : And you can't take the stance of, "I am the helper and therefore I must not ..."

Q5 : Because it won't do much good. These guys can do a whole lot of damage.

Q6 : Then there's also the danger in your own feelings that you can then ... I mean, there has to be a way that you deal with that not just as the helper but otherwise. Then you're overlapping and you're in the eight directions and the four places [Laughter].

Q7 : You're not hitting the middle. I know that part.

JIS : It's also equanimity. Equanimity is the fourth.

Q7 : Not so easy.

SB : But that's also partly what I mean by 'your best failure.' If it matters enough, you're going to offer what you've got. Even though you know you're going to mess up in some way.

Q6 : But do you offer it even though you're not in equanimity? And you know you're not?

Q7 : If you care enough.

Q8 : I think, sometimes, you do.

JIS : Are you at that precipice that you have to, or is there room to wait? You make that discrimination.

I want to finish about being pierced. If we're willing to be pierced by suffering, what we discover is that which pierces us is also inside of us. It's already inside of us and so it, the piercing, makes that connection between what is outside and what is inside.

We see that, in fact, we have that sorrow, we have that suffering; we have that very human condition within us as well. So, things become, in the language we're speaking this week, more whole because by allowing ourselves to be pierced, we've connected that field outside and the field inside.

Q5 : Turns our wounds into medicine.

JIS : Yes, and their wounds into medicine for us. Then, who is healing whom in that moment? In the just and loving gaze, who is giving and who is receiving?

Q4 : Yeah. And the piercing can make us angry, too.

JIS : The person can make us angry, and we do it anyway. We allow ourselves to be pierced anyway. Because it's not just about us. Does that make sense?

Q4 : One of my heroes of the world is the Dalai Lama. Sometimes I think I get global because I don't want to get personal at this level, but he's the reincarnation of compassion. I get angry at what's done with the Tibetan people and can't get off that when it comes up. And yet I get from him the sense that he's really forgiving of the Chinese government, and he's

seen the worst of the worst. Things I can't even imagine, and he can say I have this lovingkindness and compassion, all those things, for the Chinese government ... I'm just blown away by it.

Q9 : It seems to me that when he sits down to meditate every morning, he too works with anger.

Q4 : Good point. He says he resigned as the secular leader but he'll still be the spiritual leader.

JIS : It's complicated and probably more than we can talk about, but I want to recommend Pico Iyer's book on the Dalai Lama, which came out about a year ago, *The Open Road*. It's a fantastic book. Pico Iyer spent a lot of time with the Dalai Lama, and he wrote a kind of history about the community in Dharamsala and the Dalai Lama. There's lots of interesting stuff in there. The Dalai Lama has a brother who is a Rinpoche, a Tulku, who gave back his robes, is secular, lives in Dharamsala, and has the complete opposite view that the Chinese are doing this horrible thing and we've got to fight them. And they work together. There's a wholeness that's larger than just the Dalai Lama, although he's whole himself. There's a lot going on there and I really recommend this book because it's respectful and complicated.

Q11 : Speaking of the military, last night I was very touched by some feelings I got from what you were sharing. I can't clearly articulate or say where I got them. I felt them out of thinking of what a person in the military thinks who is trained to kill. How do they deal with that? How do we ameliorate or add just a little bit of compassion to their situation? How do we assist them? How does that work with these young people at the Air Force Academy just starting to do this and maybe not having done any of the things that have to be done. They have to think about it. So that's a very heavy thing going on in our lives right now.

JIS : Yes. It is indeed.

Q12 : And there's also homelessness and several other problems with the military thing where we have to kill and poison. Can you address in some way ... I don't know what my question is.

SB : Why don't you bring the Brahma Viharas, because you're really asking how does this connect with what we're saying about the Brahma Viharas?

Q12 : Not only for those who have to go out and do these bad things, but those of us who are relating with them. Maybe some who have a similar situation that is, in some way, not official war.

SB : I haven't actually thought about it in this way but your question does bring it to me. That is kind of how I feel about my work at the Air Force Academy. It doesn't matter whether I like the project, actually. I think there may be times when the violent act would be that you choose to stop something, but our nation is choosing that as the only way to deal with our problems. So we have a major problem there. I don't feel very happy about being part of the project, but that's my feeling. That's different from my understanding of why it's important to offer what we can offer there. That's that distinction.

Q13 : I'd like to say, it's important for us to be present and to show compassion, to show kindness to people who do things we don't like. Because that's the only way to change it. I know a lot of wild people who do a lot of things that I disagree with. But I know if I reject them they're just going to reject me, so how can I have any effect? What am I doing that is any different than them? I'm not going to get anywhere. But when I'm kind it's amazing the changes I can make. I mean I can't change somebody's life completely; it's their life, not mine. But it's the little things. I've seen some amazing things even if I don't like or can't stand the person.

JIS : I spoke at the Air Force Academy last year, about traditions of nonviolence. There was a group of people, psychologists mostly, from Ft. Carson, who came up to hear the talk because there's a program at Ft. Carson — it just started a year ago — which came from the soldiers themselves. The soldiers wanted a program of making amends for what they've done. They felt it was essential to their healing that amend-making reparations be a part of their healing process. This had never happened before in the military. The psychologists were looking for information about how to create such a program for the first time. And that moved me so much : That this had come from the soldiers themselves, that someone had listened, and that they were actually going to try to create such a program. So that felt like a concrete, real, and moving response from within the system itself. We should find out, know about, and support stuff like that to the extent that we can.

When I met the people from Ft. Carson, there were a number of Air Force cadets there who I had met visiting with Sarah. My sense of them was that they just had no idea of what

was about to happen to them. They were so young and so green and so unripe. And it felt so important to me that we not punish them for that mistake. This program at Ft. Carson felt like a way of not punishing them for that mistake of youth that you could just watch them making.

Q14 : But isn't that also the path they chose to make their way?

SB : Some of them chose it because it's a free education and they didn't have any money.

Q15 : For all of the cadets that I knew, that was their situation without exception. From my school. They all went for school.

Q16 : There's a higher thing, to me. We all allow war. Every one of us in here. I can't just say the soldier out killing. I didn't object to the Gulf War when I should have in 2001. We all should have. We were silent. They were carrying out what we authorized them to do. I take responsibility on that as well. I don't look at just the poor soldier. I think it's atrocious.

Q17 : It's our agency.

Q16 : That's right. I don't have clean hands.

Q18 : There's a really good example of how to think about the Brahma Viharas. These soldiers that everybody is concerned about, there's a sniper unit out at Ft. Carson where a large number of them have come back and performed unbelievable random homicides, sniping on the street. They don't get a lot of publicity, these cases, for obvious reasons. Senator Salazar was asked to look into it. These guys are now coming back and they are living in literal hell. Can you, or maybe I if I end up representing one of them, can you or I really fix it? We can't fix it. It's that attitude of this lovingkindness, compassion, peace. You pick up a newspaper and you read this story about three people (and this is a true case) nailing a sign to a post for a yard sale who ended up getting gunned down by a bunch of decorated Ft. Carson soldiers who had been on their third tour. This is not an isolated case. You can look all over the country. This isn't just about how can we help these poor guys. These guys are coming back as killers. We can help by holding that, it feels to me, in this way.

Until I heard Joan speak about this peace I couldn't even figure out what you are supposed to do. When people kill people, and when people hurt people, or like the people that everybody is working with in psychiatric hospitals, this is why. We have to make that connection. It can't be just sitting back and looking at it from afar and judging it. We have to be able to make this connection. I don't know how else to repair the world without us holding that in our hearts and making the connection.

Q19 : Joan, you said something about the guy who could connect with the really challenging and difficult patients and you said you knew it wasn't about him. And then you said something about the body between him and them and I'm wondering if you could expand on that.

JIS : Instead of coming at it like there's me sitting here and there's you sitting there and we're going to have a conversation like a tennis match, back and forth, when we talk about the sense of a self that's larger than inside of us but expands and extends out and meets the world and then even meets the vastness, then there's a place where those extended selves, this expanded self, meets in the middle. It's where there's a third thing that's never existed in the world before. Something can happen in that space that's different than what can happen bouncing back and forth between our two internal realities. Does that make sense?

Q17 : So is that 'host' and 'guest'? Just the same thing? We just totally got past that boundary.

JIS : Yes. What's the self? The self is this thing that's made up of two people. That's the self.

SB : At that moment.

JIS : At that moment.

Q18 : That's the intersection.

JIS : Yeah. What are you feeling compassion for? It's not, *I'm delivering compassion to you like a hot meal*. It's that the unit about which you feel compassion is the two together, so you don't have to lose who you are in order to come into some kind of relationship with this incredibly difficult person.

Q19 : You don't have to condone the act.

JIS : Yeah.

Q17 : You don't. There's nothing about saying, "Good job. Good job on killing those people." There's nothing about that. That's not even in the field.

JIS : Or, the one that I just find more pernicious : "Yes, I can imagine that I might do that." No! I'm sorry.

Q17 : That person already knows that you're coming at them from the tennis match. Or, I can imagine your pain that caused you to rape that poor little girl. Well, of course you can't! So that's not real.

JIS : So what is?

SB : How about what you do with yourself when you just did something stupid?

Q17 : Oh Sarah, I can't do that! [Laughter]

SB : Yeah! [Laughter]

Q17 : I'm harder on myself than I am on the serial killer. Of course, Sarah, you have to do all this Bramha Vihara business with yourself. Did that address the question?

SB : You've got me thinking about the Brahma Vihara Rag! It's time to quit.

JIS : Did that address your question?

Q18 : Yeah, I think so.

SB : There is something very mysterious about that place of not knowing. That place in the middle you don't have a name for.

Q19 : Because it's never existed. Only right now.

SB : Right. So it's completely alive and nameless and unknowable in a sense. That's why it has that quality. *I want to pin it down but I can't quite.* But you know it's there. Because you know it's actually in the room.

JIS : It's the unpredictable that's arisen in that circumstance because of those causes and conditions.

Q19 : So you just kind of have to tremble in that.

JIS : Yeah.

Q19 : We're creating that space and that's part of what we're trying to create, to make.

JIS : Yeah, and so what do you bring into that space? Do you bring your obsessions, passions, the things that are consuming you, the things that have got you in knots? Is that what you bring into that space?

Q19 : Maybe.

JIS : Maybe. And you know what it's like when you do. The choice we have is to bring something else, which might just be nothing but our *I don't know*. But that might be what you bring, and that's better than everything already predetermined and tied up in knots.



Consider that you have an assumption of what the outcome ought to be. The outcome ought to be that we all get open, right? So you're bringing that assumption as well as the openness. What if you brought the openness without the assumption? Then there's no failing. There's only what happens.

SB : And your story about them can be an obstacle. If you say, "That person is really closed," you've already made a story about them.

Q19 : You really have to be in an unknowable mind. Really.

JIS : Yeah, really. [Laughter]

SB : Because that thing between you really is unknowable, whether you think so or not.

Q14 : No matter how many times you've known it before?

SB : Because you haven't! You haven't ever known that particular thing before. It never existed before.

Q19 : In the oldest, thorniest, most tired relationship? [Laughter]

JIS : Especially the oldest, thorniest, most tired relationship. Because the old, tired, thorniest relationships are made up of 90% story and 10% what actually happened ten years ago. Right? And to think that says anything about what is true now, seems crazy to me. [Laughter]

Q20 : Can I ask you for another word for equanimity? Because this seems to be a lot of what we're talking about and I can't get a hold on equanimity.

Q19 : What's wrong with equanimity?

Q20 : I can't quite own it somehow. I can't think, *Oh, this is a moment for equanimity.*

JIS : How about steadiness?

SB : I knew she wanted an Anglo-Saxon word rather than a Latin word. [Laughter]

Q19 : Another thing you said that really meant something to me was, "keeping pace with life."

JIS : If you're keeping pace with your life, you have equanimity. We tend to think of equanimity as being in a kind of calmness and slowness and stateliness, but equanimity isn't not moving, it's *not minding* that you're moving.

SB : If we're coming from Trungpa's formulation, if we're talking about body, equanimity is when there's not a gap between mind and body.

JIS : It's not that things are moving slowly, because sometimes things are moving very quickly, but you're keeping pace with the fact that they're moving quickly, so it's okay. That's equanimity.

Q20 : Last spring Wet Mountain Sangha received a letter from a prisoner that was a request for a pen pal and I took that as a task for myself. Before very long I felt he was asking me things I couldn't do. He wanted me to find a home for him, so he could tell the parole board that he had a place to go. The implication was that he wanted to come to my home. That's not something I could do. I wrote him and gave him, with Sarah's help, some contacts. I then received another letter from him that was even more insistent. I wrote a second response to this and told him that I didn't have the resources to do this. In the meantime, I talked with someone at the prison who dealt with prisoners and I said I would like to correspond with him. I haven't heard from him since. I don't know how that fits into what we're saying here but it seems pertinent. I had the wish to correspond with this man but not to do the deal that he was making.

JIS : So correspondence isn't presently possible in that space between the two of you. That's what you know. It might be possible in the future. It might happen again. It might never happen again. But right now, within the space between the two of you it's not possible. So, to me, that feels temporarily complete; provisionally complete.

Q20 : My first inclination is to send another letter to him. [Pause] No?

JIS : I don't think there's anything missing in what you did and I think you can leave it with a clear conscience.

Q14 : With no guilt.

JIS : At the level of ruthless inquiry in your situation, I might wonder what it was in me that needed something to continue under these circumstances. What was it in me that felt dissatisfied?

Q20: It didn't feel finished.

JIS : So my inquiry of myself in that situation might be : What did I expect? What would feel finished to me? What definition of myself would tell me what 'finished' means? I'm not speaking about you. But, for example, "I would need him to understand that I'd been really decent to him." Is there something like that that I need?

Q20 : I'll look at that.

JIS : So, is there anything else that must be said before we close tonight?

Thank you.