

## **October 25, 2022 Tuesday Evening, Living Awake Class**

(This talk not yet reviewed by Barbara and Aaron)

States and Stages of Consciousness; Crucifixion and Resurrection Initiation; Seeing the Ox

**Barbara:** Good evening. I hope you are all well. We're getting beautiful weather that's not going to last. It's been up to 70 the last few days, but we know winter is coming.

Some of you heard me say I was getting the glass block windows original to this house replaced in my office here, what was the garage. They were very drafty, and I sat here through much of last winter in a winter coat.

They were installed yesterday Much to my delight, I have a beautiful 70-foot spruce tree now, outside my window, a tree we planted as a seedling in 1971. There's a very large maple too. I'm sitting, I'd say 15 to 20 feet from the trunk of this towering spruce, almost under it. It has such beautiful energy. I could feel it through the glass block. I could vaguely see movement of branches through the glass block, but not clear. I didn't know exactly where the tree was going to align with the window. It's home to lots of wildlife. I'm watching squirrels scampering up and down the branches, and birds flying in and out. It's very beautiful. It was a big decision to replace the windows, and expensive. But some of you may remember me sitting with a blanket wrapped around me because it was so cold in here last winter.

I woke up this morning at 5am. Aaron had said he was going to clarify for me what he was going to teach tonight. Normally, I would not have gotten up at 5am to do that. But I woke up, and as I was about to roll over and go back to sleep, Aaron said, "Are you ready to get to work?" So, we spent a number of hours talking.

I get it, but it has some convolutions. If you don't get it, we'll have time for questions and talking. I'm just going to bring Aaron in and invite him to talk.

I assume that you got the assignment that I sent out a week and a half ago, so I don't need to read that to you.

**From Barbara while reviewing. After many hours talking about it with Aaron, I still don't fully understand the relationship of states and stages. He reminds me they are in a reciprocal relationship and asks me not to over-worry this. Let it go. Gradually it will become clear. I offer you the same guidance from him.**

**Aaron:** My blessings and love to you. I am Aaron. Let us look at the states and stages of consciousness chart.

So, bringing your attention to the states of consciousness. When you're born, you're born into a very young child's state of consciousness, and usually the stage of magical consciousness. Very much in the Gross state. Actually, when you're born you may be briefly in a much higher state and stage of consciousness, whatever was the highest state experienced in the past. But as you move into the experience of being a two- and

three-year-old, there's magical and mythical consciousness stages of the Gross state. This comes with being human.

"Oh, I didn't write with markers on the wall. The fairy that came into the house did that. It's not my fault." And the child really believes it, to some degree.

We move on to the stage of rational consciousness, still gross state. Open, then, to vision logic stage, still gross state. Then the subtle consciousness stage which is the opening of the Subtle State too. These are the states and stages of consciousness. Throughout any day you may open to various stages of consciousness while still somewhat within one state.

If you left something to burn on the stove, become annoyed. There are other people in the house. Your first thought may not be, "Ah, I forgot the food," but "Who did that?" Looking for someone else to pin it on. Magical consciousness.

But because your usual stage of consciousness is higher, you catch yourself. "Ah, no one but me. I'm the one that did this. I'll clean it up." Rational consciousness.

At the end of rational consciousness, the next stage is called vision logic consciousness. With vision logic, you begin to see more into the nuances of things. Smelling the food burning, "I left the pan on the stove. I've been so involved with this or that that I have not been focusing. I have not been present. I offer myself compassion while I clean up the mess."

So, there's a sense of, let's say openheartedness. You come into the room, and somebody starts to yell at you. Instead of the rational or pre-rational consciousness that jumps to defend yourself, you stop. "Wow, that person is angry. What's going on?" So, you don't take it personally so much as deeply hear the other person's pain, which may have nothing to do with the situation about which they are yelling. Vision logic takes the bigger picture.

I'm trying to stay with the chart, here...

Now, these are not steps. It's a gradual slope and you move up and down on the slope. At the end of vision logic, you start to open to psychic consciousness. As one example of that, you've just burned the food, just burned dinner. You go into the room where your spouse or a family member is looking up at you, glaring. Well, you don't have to be psychic to know they're angry!

Maybe you had promised them a delicious meal that they love. You were going to make them something special for dinner. They've been looking forward to it. Psychic consciousness begins to be able to pick up subtle hints. Not just the strong feeling of anger but subtle hints because you are no longer caught in your own mind and stories. You're much more open. And then you don't need to fix anything but just deeply open and hear that other person's pain without taking it personally.

So you're opening here to subtle and vision logic consciousness. Subtle is the state of consciousness. You're opening to that state. We look at the states on that chart—gross, subtle, causal, and beyond the causal.

All I want you to understand now is that they move back and forth, and that the stage of consciousness you are in, wherever you are most deeply settled, whichever stage, from that stage, when different states arise you interpret them from that stage. Please don't worry now about the precise relationship of Stage and State. It doesn't matter, for now.

I want to go through this again. If I'm very caught in rational consciousness, the state of gross consciousness, and then I start picking up energy from the family members because of the awful scent of the burned dinner, I will interpret what I'm picking up and respond to it from whichever state is predominant for me at that moment. It may be a very low, gross consciousness, so their anger triggers my anger, and my angry energy triggers their angry energy. I stop and breathe and simply note, "I am getting pulled into a low level of consciousness, here. I am not open to feeling and connecting." I take a deep breath and remind myself to come back into a more subtle consciousness. It's available. It doesn't close off. It's a spectrum—mind is here on the spectrum or there on the spectrum.

So, you can find yourself whenever a lot of anger arises, able to note the anger, which we do with mindfulness, and then not only to note it from that gross stage and state, but to note it from a much more openhearted, subtle stage and state.

I know this is a lot of words, and I've not explained at all how we do this. I want to bring in another way of observing this, just to give you a different vocabulary that may help you understand the states and stages vocabulary. Please remember that vocabulary is not the important thing but presence and direct experience.

We've been looking in class from the point of view of the person looking for the ox. How many of you have any familiarity with the *dark night of the soul*, the writings about it or practices? Let me see by your hands... A number of you.

We have the *dark night of the senses*, first. This is basically the place where you shut down. You feel alone, maybe abandoned. There's a feeling, "Why is this happening to me?" Anger comes up. You feel bereft of any spiritual connection.

This dark night of the senses comes on during subtle consciousness, and then later, the dark night of the soul, where the soul finds itself in a dark space, feeling loss of purpose & meaning in life; feels personal failure; 'emptiness; and as if nothing matters... Then the ego-self dies and the true self, that was always there, emerges and becomes more stable.

It's at this stage, beyond psychic consciousness, that we open to those dark night of the senses, dark night of the soul. I'm not going to talk too much about that now. We will do some talking about it at the retreat, for those who will be at the retreat.

Give me a minute while I pull some thoughts together, here. I was coaching Barbara on all this today for hours, but we only have an hour here, not three or four, for me to explain all of this. Let me pull it together...

From my perspective, I see your lives as a series of what I call initiations. Birth is the first initiation. Moving through that passageway from the fetal stage into suddenly out there in the air, disconnected from the mother. Feeling the cold; seeing the light; hearing the sound. It's hard.

Some of you worry what will happen at death. The passage into death is quite easy. The passage into life is much more challenging. If you've been born, dying is not going to be too hard, I promise you. You're opening at birth from a vast space, through this tunnel into a narrow space, whereas at death you're moving back through into the vastness.

Sometimes we have used the term *crucifixion initiation*. None of you are going to be nailed to a cross, literally. All of you have experienced numerous crucifixion initiations. You experience these in a minor way every time you stub your toe, or somebody yells at you in anger. It's an initiation, by which I mean a moving into an experience where something pushes at you.

Now, watch my hand. I'm going to move my hand toward the camera. Obviously, I can't touch you. But watch your body and see what happens.... I'll do it again...

Could you feel that energy push? Some yes, some no. It's okay if you couldn't. Let's try it a different way. I'm warning you that I'm going to shout, but not telling you when I'm going to shout. So now you're a little tense, expecting my shout. But I'm just still talking; nothing is going on. You start to relax. It could be ten minutes from now; who knows?

This kind of initiation is when the mind/body pick up some kind of perception or experience that's not even necessarily unpleasant, just slams into you and brings up your armor. So, we'll look and see if you feel yourself (*Shout!*)

Could you feel yourself contracting? Even a subtle contraction? Many of you have done this with me before. When we note "contracting, contracting, hearing, hearing, contracting, unpleasant," the armor that instinctively comes up because you are a mammal and it's a mammalian reflex, it opens again right away, with kindness and compassion for the human that you are, the mammal that you are, that contracts with something sudden that feels dangerous.

When I'm using these terms, *crucifixion initiation* and *resurrection initiation*, I'm not speaking of them in terms of Christian lore but simply, these are how these are used.

The crucifixion initiation, which is the body moving into a place of alarm and contraction and separation; the mind moving there.

And resurrection initiation, which is the remembering to come back to light. To put it in other words, moving back from the rational or pre-rational that armored you back into the subtle and above the subtle. “Ahh, I’m okay. That was just an instinctive closing. I’m okay.”

Let’s try it again. So, when I shout, watch your energy field close. Watch how mind can come in and note, “closing, separating,” and moving down into a lower stage of consciousness, literally. That which is aware of closing is not closed. This is just a mechanical reaction of the human, or of any mammal.

Banner was in the room before. He’s often here during class. But I suggested to Barbara, “Please get him out because I’m going to shout, and it will upset him.” He’s a mammal. If Barbara’s body is sitting here at the computer and suddenly shouts, Banner is going to be worried. His energy field is going to close. He’s going to move into a lower stage of consciousness, temporarily.

So, watch this closure—the mindfulness kicking in, kindness to the self, and the energy reopening. This is what we call *resurrection initiation*. Just reopening into the light, into the vastness of what you are, letting go of the shrunk self, the diminished self, and opening back out into the fullness of the divine self. Are you ready to try it?

So, I’m going to go on talking. I don’t want you to know when I’m going to yell; most of you are already anticipating it. It’s just a (*Shout!*)

Watch contraction. “Contracting, contracting.” What is it that’s aware of the contraction? The important thing is that you don’t remain in that contracted state for hours, or even for minutes. Even while there is still trembling of the energy field, smile and open out into the light again. Can you feel your energy field beginning to reopen? Spaciousness, light, love.

In connection to your reasons for the incarnation, this is a heart of it. You are here as third density human to learn how to bring compassion where there has been absence of compassion. How to bring compassion and regain spaciousness where there has been contraction. Because when you are contracted, light cannot move into you or through you and out. And the role of you as third density emerging into, transitioning into, higher density human is for this light and energy to flow out of you. So beautiful. Letting it flow.

There is nothing bad about the fact that you contract. It’s a kind of knee-jerk response. It’s because you have a physical body.

Let me just add something here, as an aside. If you feel a lot of nervous energy movement, if it’s hard for you to sit still, I’m going to ask you, as a gift to others on the

screen, to simply turn off the video. That way people are not distracted by a lot of movement. You're still here, you can still hear us, but turning off the video will help others. Thank you.

So, we watch this shift—closing off, reopening. Let's take ourselves back to the ox.

"I want to see the ox." Can you feel the contraction in that? Subtle contraction. "I must see the ox. Where is the ox?" Grasping, contraction. It's a mild form of crucifixion initiation, that kind of grasping.

You suddenly see footprints. "Ah, there *is* an ox. There is something beyond this lower stage of consciousness. They keep telling me that I am awake. Maybe, maybe." Consider it.

Gradually opening. At the point where you actually catch sight of the tail of the ox, ah, there's an experience that can ground you into knowing the higher state of consciousness and the higher stages of consciousness. "Yes! There is something higher than this very mundane consciousness. I keep getting glimpses of it. Yes!" And you set off after the ox.

And with perseverance and practice, you "catch" the ox, by which I mean you have a deep experience of something beyond the aggregates and are no longer so centered into the idea, "I am these aggregates." Yes, the aggregates are one expression of you, but what are you beyond that?

Here you are moving through. This passageway will probably take you into those two dark nights, one and then the other.

If you are not the aggregates, and you cannot directly see divinity, what are you? You have annihilated yourself. Then the feeling, "There is no God. There is no love in the universe. I am all alone here." Panic.

As you start to know this is a natural phase, and an important one, it does not come just once and pass, it comes repeatedly. Coming in closer to the Unconditioned, and then, because it feels so overwhelming, backing away in denial of it. And again, and again.

Watching spaciousness and contraction. Who is experiencing contraction? And reopening back into the spaciousness. Learning to trust the spaciousness. (And again, for those who will be at the retreat, this will be a focus for the week.) Watching the ways we come into spaciousness, the ways it may feel overwhelming and you pull back out.

Let's try a short guided meditation here. Get yourselves comfortable.

You're all astronauts, and we're learning things about being in outer space. We've all climbed into this shuttle that's taking us up to a ship floating way out, beyond Earth

limits. I invite you up into this broad deck, and knowledgeable people help you put on your spacesuits.

Some of you have heard me talk about that you are angels in earthsuits. You're wearing this heavy earthsuit, which you're not aware of because that's what's around you all the time. Now we're going to put this angel in earthsuit into a spacesuit. Oxygen tank on your back, a mask around your head. They test it; everything is settled.

When I get the sign that everybody is ready, we're going to open the big bay doors. You're going to stand at the edge of the doorway and jump.

Panic comes up. "I'll drift away!" Well, we have several hundred trained people on little space motorcycles. Nobody is going to let you drift too far. They'll go out and catch you and bring you back.

But for now, I'm asking you to experience jumping out into space. If it's easier, imagine yourself on a long tether so that you can only float so far. Float there for a bit, and when you're ready, cut the tether.

Let's do this for five minutes. You're suited up. Your air is fine. You've practiced this in an enclosed chamber with no gravity or oxygen, but on the spaceship. Now you're literally going to jump out there—nothing but space and stars.

You will fall. How far will you fall? "What if they miss me? What if I float too far away?" Watch the fear and contraction. Trust that this team of highly trained humans and angels, with our little space motorcycles, will come after you. No harm will come to you.

So, watch the contraction, and then when it comes, the feeling of, "Oh!" Stars around you, gravity-less. Just floating in space. How amazing!

In the distance you see the beautiful orb of the Earth. So beautiful. I'll be quiet now for five minutes...

*(sitting)*

You have a small beeper. If you feel that you're drifting too far from the spaceship, too far from safety, just beep and one of the pickup team will—not rescue; you don't need to be rescued—but one of the pickup team will come for you. If you're enjoying hanging out there in space, stay there for a bit.

*(sitting)*

And now each of you is being picked up, either with relief or reluctantly. Being drawn in, placed onto the seat of the pickup vehicle. Still out there in space, but riding like a space motorcycle, safety belt fastened, heading back into the open door of the ship. Doors closing behind you, and help to remove the space suit.

In your small groups you'll have a chance to look more at this experience. I don't know what John has planned for the meditation time, but perhaps he'll incorporate some of this in, also.

When you practice with vipassana, come to a place of access concentration, mind if very clear, precise, picking up each object, dropping it away. You begin to see with such clarity that everything in the conditioned realm is arising out of conditions and passing away—everything.

Then there comes a kind of shift, almost the kind of shift of suddenly finding yourself in outer space, no tether. This is the point of truly seeing the ox. This is the stage of opening to the higher consciousness. It's not stable yet at all. But you do start to get a glimpse that there is something there beside mundane consciousness.

It is, in the terms I put it earlier, an enormous initiation, a kind of birth through the birth canal. When you have practiced in different ways with suddenly being in a challenging space and learned not to have mind jump into trying to fix it, but to relax into the spaciousness, you reconnect to the Divine in yourself and in the universe. You move through that birth canal into a place of just resting in awareness, joy, spaciousness, light. And this is the movement through the dark night of the senses and then dark night of the soul.

Of course, there's no guarantee that people will go through that kind of experience. But many of you have been going through such experiences or are ready to. There is no hurry. There is no right or wrong speed to move through. I don't want to set this up with expectations.

But as we move into this week of retreat with a very senior group of meditators, I'm hoping that many of you can literally come to that door of the spaceship and jump. I'll pick you up. I promise I won't let you get lost in outer space.

Mindfulness is the key. Watching contraction and fear. (*Shout!*) Did you feel yourself contract?

Breathing, contracting. Right there with contraction, where is the uncontracted? What brings me back to center. And part of this is your intention. It's helpful to start with the intention, "I am here for the highest good of myself and all beings. I am here to move beyond suffering for myself and all beings. I am here to move into compassion, and compassion to wisdom. I am here to open in love. I am ready for what I am about to undertake." And you are ready, each in your own way and at your own speed.

Ah, I could talk another hour. It's 6:53pm. I want you to have a little time to stretch and then pass this to John. And with great apologies to John—we did not get to talk yesterday or today. John's meditation instructions may or may not have anything to do with what I've just talked about. Knowing John, it will be helpful to you whatever



direction he's going. But John, I apologize that we did not speak as we had said we would. So, I know you'll take it from here with whatever feels wise and appropriate to you.

My blessings and love to you all. I'm going to give the body back to Barbara.

Let me just add: please don't get too caught up in terminology. I'm using several different chains of terms—the Ox Herding Pictures; the states and stages of consciousness; the whole idea of crucifixion and resurrection initiation—just trying to give each you some pathway that works for you. You don't need all the pathways. Drop the rest and use the one that's most useful to you.

Just plain mindfulness. Contracted; ahh, spacious. And then, resting in awareness and seeing even when I'm contracted, the spaciousness is still there. When I'm contracted, I can't see the spaciousness. I can't feel it; I can't experience it. But it is an ultimate reality. Where would it go?

Opening, opening. And at this point, you have caught the ox and are ready to start taming the ox.

I love you all. I am Aaron.