

Sinking Your Boats from Diamond Heart Book V

by A.H. Almaas

Since today is Easter, I have decided to give you a gift. It is a small gift: the view I have developed from my personal experience about the true human being. It is a straightforward, simple talk about you, about being a human being.

This work and all other schools of spiritual work, all religions, all methods and philosophies about enlightenment, liberation, God, spirit, true nature, and so on should not be necessary. I do not mean they are not necessary; I mean they should not be necessary. They are attempts to describe what a human being is actually supposed to be, and how to go about being that. They all ask the same questions: What is a human being? What is a real and complete human being? What is the real human life? What is the human life that has actualized the full human potential? What is it that we are all about and how do we go about being that?

In actuality, the human being is much bigger than the vision of any of these teachings; no teaching can encompass the totality of what is possible for a human being. We ultimately do not need any of these teachings, which are nothing but ideas and concepts created by the mind. Although genuine teachings reflect and express reality, they are nevertheless in part cultural creations that have been developed throughout history. Many of them faithfully reflect real facets of reality and, as such, are good and helpful, but they remain excess baggage to reality.

Reality is beyond any teachings that can be formulated and promulgated. Reality simply is. Everything we say about it is extra, a creation of the human mind. We cannot adhere to teachings as if they are reality. We use teachings, benefit from them, but then we discard them, we drop them. To carry teachings with us after we learn to live in reality is to carry an extra load. We need only reality, and the teachings are simply vehicles through which to reach and live in reality. Reality is beyond tools, methods, and helpful perspectives. Reality is innocent of it all.

The point is not to be enlightened or to be God realized. Rather, we are to live the way we are supposed to live. That is all, and simply so. We are to live reality the way reality actually is. Teachings approximate, and at best express, what that means and suggest how to go about it. Ultimately, teachings have no objective validity but are conceptual tools created by well meaning individuals to help us live our life in the most natural and complete way possible. Once they have served their function, teachings are to be dropped. Otherwise, they will remain addendums to reality, a weight for us to carry.

I am not saying that teachings are inaccurate, or are empty fabrications. The real ones are accurate and express reality faithfully, but they are still extra to simply living reality.

Understanding this dynamic allows us to recognize that reality is beyond any formulation and more vast than any teaching. We learn to be natural, simple, and truly autonomous. We live our lives without concepts and ideas. Otherwise, we end up becoming primarily Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jewish, and so on, which is extraneous to being simply true human beings. Concepts and beliefs bind us whereas reality itself is beyond any framework and experience. Reality is natural and totally true when we live without any ideas about it, when we spontaneously live without any self-reflection.

Teachings are boats with which to cross a river. You are not supposed to carry the boat with you on the other shore. If you carry the boat with you, you will end up with a greater load than when you started. Teachings help us see how our experience is limited and bound, and offer us ways to liberate ourselves from such unnecessary boundaries. Once we are free, to keep on looking at reality through the same lens will again bind and limit us. Once we are free, teachings become artificial, extra, and unnecessary. To be free is to be free from all concepts, all formulations, all views.

Furthermore, a teaching points toward reality, but it is not reality and will not give you reality. No teaching, on its own, gives you certainty about what reality is. The final and ultimate judge is you. Who decides ultimately what is real and what is not real? Is any teacher, philosophy, or religion going to decide for you? All of these teachers, religions, and work systems will be happy for you to find out for yourself what life is all about and how to live according to the truth. You cannot be certain of reality in any other way. A teaching points toward the truth, but you need to experience it and find out for yourself that it is reality. You have to find your own certainty; you cannot borrow it, not even from the highest teachings.

If we are to mature into real human beings, we need to recognize and to come to grips with the extent to which we ordinarily do not want to be fully responsible for our perceptions, our truths, or our life. We are largely ignorant: we do not know much about ourselves, reality, or life, and what we do know is often not true. We lack true certainty. The combination of not knowing and knowing falsely makes us feel scared and uncertain. As a result, we constantly seek some kind of view, some kind of school, some kind of teaching, some kind of belief to follow. We search for something to support ourselves. This is not bad; it is simply our normal condition.

In the beginning of the work, we don't know what is real, we don't know what is not real, and we have no idea how to find out the difference. We are scared, we are small, we feel as if we don't know. And if we did know how to go about it, we still wouldn't actually be able to do it. So the teachings are necessary. But these teachings are boats to cross the river of ignorance; they are not the other shore. Their descriptions of some of the features of the other shore are not the same as the shore itself. In order to get to the other shore, we need to abandon our boats.

If we stay in them we will never get to the shore. We need, at some point, to sink our boats. This point is as subtle as it is important, as tricky as it is necessary. We need to sink our boats exactly at the right time: if we do it too soon, we will drown in the deep waters of the river, but if we do not do it at all, we will never arrive.

It took thirty years for the first of Buddha's disciples to be enlightened. When the disciple finally saw and realized the truth, saw and understood true nature, he felt a little disconcerted. The disciple avoided Buddha because he was feeling ashamed and guilty. Finally, Buddha asked him what was going on with him. The disciple said it was hard to talk about but finally told the Buddha: "Now that I see the truth and I realize it, I see that all that you have been saying is bullshit. It is not necessary." Buddha asked him not to tell anyone. He said: "I'm glad you know the truth, but people need to think that what I say is true so that they can find out what you found out." In effect, Buddha was saying, "Don't tell anybody, they'll kill you and me and then they will have no chance of finding out what you found out." The point is more frequently referred to in the Zen koan, "When you meet the Buddha on the road kill him."

But it is not easy to abandon our beliefs. It is not easy to be completely responsible and to stand absolutely on our own, to forget all that anybody has ever said and to find out directly what we are and what reality is. We will at some point need to find out for ourselves whether there is enlightenment or not. And if there is, what is it? Is there God?

And if there is, what kind of truth is it? Is there such a thing as self-realization, ego death, rebirth, and so on? We hear about them. We read many books written about them. But what do we actually know about them? And do we really need all these ideas? If so, when do we need them and for how long?

I am not saying that these ideas are not true. The formulations of spiritual teachings are ways to say what we are all about. My own experience has shown me the reality of the concepts of enlightenment, self-realization, freedom, rebirth, God, love, and so on. All of this exists. However, I also know that we come to see that they are not important. Truth does not end there.

The jig is up when you realize that even though your notions about reality may be true, you haven't discovered them for yourself. Maybe you deeply believe all or some of these things. But what does it matter that Buddha said something or Christ said something? That in itself does not give you the certainty, let alone the real knowing, that it is true. You believe because you need to believe, not because the beliefs are true. You are scared and helpless and need to believe in something. You don't know yourself well enough to live without beliefs. When I say that we don't know ourselves well enough, I don't mean only in terms of our realization; I also mean in terms of beliefs about who we are, what we are supposed to do or to be, whether we are good or bad.

In actuality, all beliefs are in the same bag: whether they are about God and enlightenment, or about whether you are good or bad; whether about timelessness and eternity or about your being a person who was born at a certain date, the son or daughter of such and such parents. Beliefs are all in the same category. In your mind they are the same thing; they probably come physiologically from the same part of your brain. There is no difference, ultimately, between one belief and another.

Of course, it is terrifying to think, let alone accept, that these beliefs exist only in our minds. They may not be true or completely true, or true the way we believe they are true. What if after all these years we find out that Buddha is wrong about emptiness? Or that Moses never spoke to God in the burning bush? We read the stories and we believe them. Maybe the stories are not true, or maybe they were true but things changed. Maybe reality does not stay static and changes even its nature and structure. How do

we know that this is not the case? Who says that things don't change? Who says that what Buddha said then should be true now? Do we have any proof that it should be so? We don't; nobody does.

The stories we have been told may be true or not. We cannot be certain until we find out the truth for ourselves and, ultimately, until the truth is relevant for us. We have to be bold in order to ask these questions and to confront ourselves in this way. If we are to reach certainty and true autonomy of realization, we need to be willing to be heretics. What's more, we need to become universal heretics, not believing anything that we do not know from direct experience, beyond stories, beyond hearsay, and even beyond the mind.

To have a free mind is to be a universal heretic. You don't believe in the ultimate reality of any concept. You can assume any belief you find useful and attractive, but you don't need to hold on to any of it. Without being captured by your beliefs, you are strong enough and confident enough to throw away any and all beliefs and perspectives, each and every philosophy and story. You can stand totally alone, completely independent of all that comes through the mind, through time and space. This station of realization is difficult and rare. Most of us don't have the nerve to lose our minds. Although terrifying, it is necessary for true freedom.

We have to risk that we may be wrong. We have to risk the aloneness and the terror of being totally on our own. We have to risk cutting all of our supports, burning all of our bridges, destroying all of our boats. They are all ultimately and fundamentally concepts that come from hearsay or, at best, from our own past experiences. Even the concepts and knowledge that have come from our own immediate experiences cannot be relied on. That knowledge is like Buddha's words—old, unless corroborated in this moment.

Maybe a week ago you had an experience of realization, but how do you know that will be the same today? Who said that God won't change or that self-realization should continue being the same today? In other words, we cannot hold on to any concept past our direct experience of it; otherwise, what we're doing is believing a story. Whether someone else's or our own, a story is a story, not true reality here and now.

To be truly independent and autonomous, we need to be free from the concepts acquired from others as well as our own past experiences. Our minds hold on to concepts, memories, and stories. When we truly are ourselves and live in reality, we do not need concepts for support, we do not need memories to know who we are, and we do not need stories to be naturally at ease. We are who we are not because of what we believe, not because of what we remember, but because of what we are now and, ultimately, because of what we are truly.

Being real is a risk and an adventure. What will be left when all of the concepts are gone? Who will we be? How will we see the world? What kind of feelings will we have? How will we see other people? We do not really know and there is no way to find out until we do. We can see it as a movement towards ontological independence or autonomy. However, even these are approximations, familiar concepts from the past that we are now applying to something that we still do not know.

It is difficult to talk without creating another boat. We destroy one boat, and the moment that we say another word, we create a new boat. It is difficult to be and not think of being, to really forget our entire mind, to take our mind and put it into one of our pockets and zip it up for a while. But this is precisely what we need to do if we are going to find out the truth for ourselves. Such freedom and such boldness are not easy.

The boats cannot be sunk all at once. Usually we sink a few boats at a time; otherwise, we may get overwhelmed, flooded, totally disoriented. To sink all of our boats we have to confront all possibilities. We are completely and absolutely at sea then: nothing above, nothing below, nothing to hold us from any side. At this juncture, we cannot expect anyone or anything to help us. It is useless even to think that Christ will be your guide, or an angel will descend, or a bodhisattva will help. These are some of the boats that we need to abandon.

Work schools have been created to help us reach this juncture. They are useful for most of the way, for almost the totality of the inner journey. We need the boat to traverse the course, but not to finish it. We have to be completely alone at some point, absolutely independent, not simply from other people's minds but also our own. Our own mind is the juncture where other minds hook on to us. It is our mind that holds on to concepts, whether our own or others'.

The work is necessary to teach us how to build boats. But a genuine teaching shows us also how to destroy these boats, and then how to create better ones and destroy them, until we learn that we don't need boats at all. In this respect, work schools deal more directly with the situation than do world religions. Work schools rent you temporary boats while religions sell them to you for life. While the boats may keep you afloat, they will never permit you to reach the other shore. In order to cross the river and reach the other shore, you have to abandon the boat at some point.

The course of the work is a learning process. It has been described in many ways: enlightenment, freedom, liberation, realization, union. There are countless ways to go about doing the work: through the will, the heart, the mind. But, ultimately, it is a matter of learning, of growing up. The simplest way to describe this is as a process of learning to mature.

The inner journey is a matter of each of us coming into our own. What does it mean to come into our own? From the beginning, we must allow that we don't know what it means. We are not necessarily going to be bigger or better persons than we are now. Growing up might be a completely different thing. A child cannot grasp what it is to be an adult until adulthood arrives. Even if the child witnesses adulthood all the time, which is what usually happens, it does not mean there will be understanding. Understanding and real knowing of what adulthood is will have to wait for adulthood.

What we usually consider adulthood is not real adulthood; it is a case of arrested development. It is not easy to mature on our own. Our difficulty with maturation stems basically from two kinds of ignorance: what we have forgotten and what we don't yet know. Inner work is a process of remembering what we have forgotten and learning what we still don't know. We can't do one without the other. If we only remember what we have forgotten, it won't be enough. If we simply learn what we don't know, it's not enough. There has to be an interaction between the two.

Remembering what we have forgotten largely means working with the personality, the ego structure of the soul. Knowing what we don't know involves learning about essence, being, reality, and truth. Some teachings view knowing as a type of remembering, which in some way it is. For the purposes of this discussion, though, it is useful to distinguish knowing from remembering.

In doing our work it is important that we do not develop some kind of religion or belief system. We want to be free from all conceptual boxes. Ultimately, the point is not to become a Buddhist, a Christian, or a Jew but to be a true human being, to realize the truth, whatever the truth is. When we start on the path we do not know what we will realize. Our work emphasizes love of the truth, wherever that may lead. I do not say we are trying to find enlightenment, or God, or a true self. These terms are sometimes useful to illustrate certain points, but the love of the truth is what fuels the work. If there is God you will find out, if there is enlightenment you will find out, if there is a true self you will find out.

The way to actualize the truth is to love it, which then becomes a process of learning and education. You discover then what you take yourself to be and why. You take yourself to be who you think you are because of the truth that you have forgotten. Your emotions, feelings, beliefs, patterns, and conflicts determine your experience and perception. You need to delve deeply into them and investigate them in order to discover what objectively exists. You can't see the truth objectively as long as your mind is influenced by these things that have become part of the unconscious of your personality. Your fear, anger, hurt, hatred, vulnerability, and doubt all need to surface.

Inquiring into these elements of your mind allows you to discover your unconscious beliefs about reality, enlightenment, God, yourself. What you believe is supposed to happen and what your dreams and hopes are need to emerge into the light of awareness and understanding in order for you to examine their truth. This is not easy to do. No one experience that you are going to have will get rid of all of these beliefs. No single experience of enlightenment will dissolve your unconscious. You will have to deal with and come to terms with the specific forms and content of your mind.

Some teachers do seem to say that one day you will be struck by lightning and your unconscious will burn out. Although wonderfully comforting, this is an infantile belief. If it were true, we would have many more mature human beings by now. My own investigation reveals that it simply does not happen in this way. In my experience and understanding, the person who has no unconscious lives a very normal and simple life. Even after people have the experience of enlightenment, they still have to integrate their ego and their unconscious. The process of integration of the ego and personality does not happen automatically and takes longer than the realization of enlightenment. You need to absorb and metabolize the ego in order to live as a mature human being. There is no way around confronting yourself, your unconscious, your fears, your doubts. I myself haven't found any magical way around this. We each have to confront ourselves. We cannot simply practice a spiritual technique like meditation or prayer, have some deep experience, and expect it to totally transform us. The experience, regardless of how profound, simply cannot erase all the false influences on your consciousness.

If we thoroughly investigate the matter for ourselves, we see that we have to confront ourselves in very powerful and deep ways. Those persons who have arrived at the balanced maturity of humanity have

done so in the form of renunciation, discipline, friction with teacher and community, pursuit of practical tasks, following lessons given to them by their teachers, and in so many other ways that the various teachings have developed. In this work we do it through inquiry into our everyday experience.

Becoming a mature human being doesn't happen easily or instantly. Although there is grace and there is blessing, it is only to help you confront and deal with your situation. Grace won't do the whole thing for you. It will give you more confidence, more trust, but you will still have to deal with yourself. The help of the school, the teaching, and the teacher are small things compared to what you need to do yourself. This is part of the educational process of the inner path. The path requires the clarification and the transparency of all that determines your experience and perception of yourself and of the world.

Whatever questions you have, whatever you do not understand about yourself, you have to pursue. If you have any dissatisfaction, any discontentment, you need to pursue it. Teachings and teachers provide help, guidance, and orientation so that you don't spend too much time dealing with the wrong issues. The teacher saves you time, energy, and effort. But the teacher can't do it for you. The teacher gives you guidelines to help you do the practice and to help you deal with yourself.

Doing it yourself does not mean twisting reality's arm. You might find out that you can't do it yourself. Maybe that's part of the education. You might find out that you are just a little kid floating in a huge ocean. If that is the case, then you need to find out that you really don't know or maybe you can't do it. Or maybe growing up happens in a way totally different from what you thought. Maybe you find out that you have been wrong to start with, that the whole world has been a figment of your imagination. Maybe you thought all this time that you had to do things and then find out that they are done by themselves. That will be a big relief, but you still need to find out for yourself.

You can't take my word for it. I can tell you all these things, but it doesn't mean much. When I tell you, it gets you all excited for a week or two, you might meditate more intensely for awhile, but it doesn't last long. You forget and after two weeks you don't do anything. You fall asleep again and come back here hoping some new approach will work. This continues until eventually it hits you that you have to be responsible, that, ultimately, you are the final arbiter of the truth of your own experience and life. You are the one who needs to determine what is real. How can anyone convince you of the truth if you don't see it for yourself? People get convinced by the teachings but not fully, because usually underneath that conviction there are fears, vulnerabilities, and helplessness. The conviction does not stand on solid reality, but rather covers up ignorance and inner conflicts.

People use beliefs and convictions for comfort, for safety, for security, for support, as crutches. Following D. W. Winnicott's conceptualization, we can call these beliefs and convictions transitional objects. Transitional objects are the little things, like blankets and teddy bears, that babies and toddlers use to feel comfortable and safe. These objects are called transitional because of the belief that children outgrow them by internalizing the functions that these objects provide. So the objects are transitions between the stage of total dependence on the mother and the stage of psychological independence.

But this independence that we acquire as we grow up from childhood is limited. Still dependent on concepts and beliefs, this independence remains on the level of ego. True human maturity, according to

the inner teachings, is a much more radical autonomy, one in which we become independent of belief systems, philosophies, even concepts themselves. Simply recognizing the possibility of this radical maturity allows us to see how we have not yet actually outgrown the need for transitional objects but have merely exchanged physical objects for emotional or mental ones.

A person who grows up in a Christian community believes in Jesus or the Virgin; a person who grows up in a Buddhist community believes in Buddha or enlightenment; if you grow up in a Muslim family you believe in Mohammad and the Qur'an. Regardless of the truth of these things, people mostly use them as transitional objects. They use them as security blankets to go through life because it is very hard to go through life on your own. Your blanket might change throughout your life, but in some very deep way you always have one. You internalize the feeling of comfort and safety, carrying it around as your mother image in your mind. Ultimately, religion, God, and enlightenment become symbols indicating that you are too scared to be completely on your own. In some very deep but real way, you are still that little kid holding on to the blanket. Whatever the blanket may be—mommy, career, God, husband, Buddha, reality, essence—it is the child who needs to be seen and understood. We need to recognize that child, understand her fears, acknowledge her needs, respect her desires, and hold and comfort her directly.

This child within you, which is the core of what we call the ego or the personality, feels totally alone without these comforting objects. This child comforts itself with all kinds of blankets, transitional objects, teddy bears, and soft things to help it feel that things are okay. The ego self, or the inner child at its core, is not enlightened; it does not know it is okay to let go of the blanket. This part of your soul is scared, angry, hurt, and full of doubt. This inner child needs to be educated. Your essence is the educator, the teacher. This perennially infantile part of the soul will not listen, let alone learn, unless there is enough compassion, love, and acceptance. The child is scared and doesn't know who to trust. It doesn't know who to turn to. So when it hears you or me talking about ego death, it thinks, "Uh-oh, now they are going to kill me." This deep part of your personality doesn't understand what ego death means; it hears death and gets terrified.

In other words, a deep and central part of you thinks like a child. Rational things neither reach nor touch it. We need to approach this part of us with love, gentleness, kindness, and understanding. We need to understand its helplessness, fear, vulnerability, hatred, anger, dependence, and ignorance. Ultimately, the inner child isn't real, but it doesn't know that. You know that but it doesn't. The inner child takes for granted that it is you. It feels terrible about itself, angry, guilty, but it doesn't know how else to be. This is a real dilemma. We each have an inner child that is ignorant, scared, and disconnected from the real essence, that is not touched by our lofty and transcendental experiences, that still needs to be cared for and loved.

We cannot try to get rid of it nor does it simply vanish because of our enlightenment experiences. Trying to get rid of it is both impossible and the wrong way to go. If we try to get rid of it, the inner child only becomes more obstinate and more scared. We need to educate it gently and lovingly. Then, in time the inner child will dissolve, mellow out, and become softer. It will naturally melt into essential nature and

get integrated. But it will allow itself to melt only if it feels loved and secure. If we reject it and judge it, it will tend to isolate and protect itself.

The inner child is a deep structure of the person you take yourself to be, the image that you have adopted to form you. Of course, you do not always experience yourself as a child. Sometimes you feel like a child, sometimes like an adult, other times somewhere in between, and sometimes even like an infant or an embryo. The image changes all the time; it does not stay exactly the same. Sometimes it is just a little thing floating in space, sometimes it is the image of a man or woman, sometimes a teenager, sometimes grandiose, sometimes helpless. The image structures the soul into an ego-self, which we end up believing is who we are, all that we are, while it is actually only one form that the soul assumes. But it is important to understand that the inner child is simply an inner structure, a construct of history, and neither exists on its own nor has to continue existing as a formative structure in our experience.

All of the manifestations of essence, truth, and reality are needed to deal with this infantile part of us. True nature, with all of its qualities of compassion, love, acceptance, will, strength, and so on, ultimately needs to become the teacher for the immature part of our soul. We understand and accept this ego structure and immature part of the soul by allowing it to feel whatever it feels and think whatever it thinks, without judging its feelings or thoughts or needs. We don't reject it because it has a bad thought; rather, we look and see what is happening. If it is angry, let it be angry, even if you can't understand why it is angry. Most likely, there is hurt under the anger. If it is grandiose and proud of itself, find out why, because it probably feels deficient and scared. If it is scared and terrified, it needs your compassion more than anything else. It is important to understand this infantile part emotionally and psychologically, not only epistemologically as a construct, for it to yield to being integrated into our maturity.

Allowing this infantile structure to be exactly where it is usually involves dealing with the superego. The superego criticizes and abandons this immature part precisely because it can be affected in this way. Your essence, your true nature, doesn't feel rejected or judged, nor does it give a damn about these manifestations. Our essential nature doesn't have an ear for these things. But this immature part of you, the ego self, has just the ear for these things. And it is this part of you that needs to be educated, to mature little by little, through a gradual and gentle process of learning.

Allowing the immature part does not mean letting it run amok or letting it destroy your life. So when I say accept and understand the child in you, I don't mean give it license to act out all its feelings and impulses. I mean accept its feelings, its state. Accept how it is, how it experiences itself, but don't accept actions that may harm you or others. For example, sometimes that part of you might feel like it wants to hang itself, but accepting it doesn't mean that you go out and do it. Certainly you let it feel these things, which will give you the opportunity to understand why it feels this way. You listen to that part of yourself sympathetically. "Ah, you want to hang yourself, you must be having a hard time. What is it, what's bothering you?" You try to find out what is going on with it. It must be really scared or hurt, or something is bothering it terribly, otherwise why would it have such violent urges.

You don't just say, "Oh, terrible, bad," and spank it and send it to its room. But you also don't let it go hang itself or harm other people, mess up the house, or be lazy and lie on the couch for years without doing anything useful. You have to be firm with it, just as you need to be loving and gentle, otherwise it won't grow up. This balanced attitude and guidance is what will finally help it learn.

Ultimately, not only the inner child but all of our thoughts, fantasies, feelings, and dreams need to be understood, not judged and rejected. The immature ones continue to arise in our experience due to lack of knowledge and understanding and, ultimately, due to ignorance. No thought or feeling should be prohibited in you. Every feeling, every thought, every idea, regardless of how wonderful or disgusting, should be allowed. There needs to be absolute freedom to think, feel, desire, imagine, and dream. These things, however, should be allowed within the context of understanding and not indulgence. We cannot be free of the power of concepts if we are not open to them and their emotional manifestations.

Understanding the ignorance of the ego, the ignorance that results from what we have forgotten, is necessary in order for the immature to mature. The soul, our individual consciousness, is much larger than this immature ego part of her. However, she does not grow, or grows with various imbalances, when we do not deal with this immature part of us. In most cases, she does not grow because she identifies with this immature part and believes it is the totality of her. Only by becoming liberated from this inner child and integrating it into a larger context can she grow. She grows then as this part grows, with it and inseparable from it. In those rare cases when the soul develops without dealing with this immature part, the development is askew, not balanced, and usually leads to oddness and strange behaviors and attitudes, common in many spiritual circles. There is no real maturity here. The only way for the soul to move towards true maturity is by coming to terms with this immature part in a genuine way, integrating it, and including it in her development. Then the soul grows as a whole, with balance and grace.

The other kind of ignorance, on the side of our being and our essence, is what we don't know. Essence is what is needed to teach and transform the soul. To live a true human life means the integration of what we have forgotten and what we don't know, of ego and essence. It is the coming together, the harmony, of the surface with the depth. We, ego and essence, become one. We become one through and through. We mature as a nondual soul. This won't happen easily or in a limited amount of time or with a limited amount of work and understanding.

You are going to have to put everything you've got into it. You are the object of your work, not some abstract ego and essence. You are dealing with your life, your situation, your mind, your heart, and your nature. You can use all the concepts and ideas available from the outside, as I have said, but use them intelligently. Use them as vehicles, as boats, not as the truth itself. Use them to find out what is true, not just to comfort yourself with what might be true. Use them to confront the truth of yourself, not to avoid certain truths.

This way, little by little, we learn to become more autonomous, more independent. Not in the sense that we don't need people, but in the sense that we learn to find out for ourselves by ourselves.

Ultimately, the only thing that will free us is our own experience, our own perception, our own understanding. We have to be converted by our own experience. We have to attain our own certainty.

It is inherent in the dignity of the human being that you can do this. You can become a real human being. It is possible to be real beyond ideas, beyond boats, beyond books and teachings. You can walk on your own feet; you can be your nature beyond words, beyond concepts, beyond teachings. You can simply be, and that will be the greatest teaching, the greatest testament to humanity.

To be truly a mature human being you have to go beyond all content of mind, yours and others'. Reality is what is, not what we call it, not what we think about it, not what we say about it. Reality is beyond all creations of mind, regardless how sublime and spiritual. There will be more creations in the future. Our mind will not stop creating concepts and we will never stop hearing stories. But we can now with maturity know how things work, take stories and thoughts as such, for we are directly living reality as it is.

One thing we are implying here is that we can experience and know reality beyond concepts and history, independent of concepts and history.

Recognition of this radical maturity indicates that it is possible for us to live with absolute fearless spontaneity. The fearless spontaneity will manifest as love, truth, confidence, and goodness. We are usually afraid that if we are spontaneous and fearless we will do bad things, we will make mistakes. But we need to learn why we think this way. What are you afraid of doing? What do you think is going to happen? All these doubts need to be thoroughly looked into and understood, for such fear and uncertainty only points to some undigested material in our mind. We probably have not seen and understood something about our motivation even though we might dimly intuit it. This lack of understanding appears as uncertainty, as fear of spontaneity. As I've said, we need both to learn and to mature on the path. There is no end to it. There does not come a time when you completely mature and you finish. I don't think that is possible. As long as you are alive you mature. You can be awakened but this does not automatically mean there is no further process of maturation.

Our potential is infinite, inexhaustible; hence there is always realization after any realization. You'll have all kinds of experiences, states, and conditions that may feel like an ultimate state of realization, but then that too keeps changing. In my understanding, the truest state of realization is that in which whenever you realize something, no matter what it is, you go beyond it. The moment you say this is it, you will get stuck with a concept, and tomorrow there will be something else. So the true state of realization is more of a lack of attachment to realization.

Attachment comes from creating a concept or an idea of what is real and not real, right and not right, and then holding on to it. When you are really autonomous, you are truly mature. You don't need boats; you don't need to think even that you don't need boats. You don't need to think you are enlightened. If you need to think that you are enlightened, you still need a boat. To be a truly mature human being, you don't need to think anything about where you are. Enlightenment is an idea that was created because people forgot how to be themselves. If human beings never forgot their original state, there would be no idea of enlightenment. No one would know there was anything like that.

Imagine that all human beings from the beginning were free and no one lost their freedom. Would anyone have an idea of God or enlightenment? No, people would go about their business being happy. They wouldn't need any boats. The boats exist because we need to get free, because we are broken and lost, because we are separated from our Beloved, because we are split from our true nature. As a result, we have many ideas about how to get what we have lost. But if you are really free, you don't need to think about it. And since there is no need for it, the concept will simply not arise.

This is true about any concept; we have the concept because we lack something, because we think something is absent. Even the concept of love would not be there if we did not lack love. People make a big deal about love because it is missing, because it is rare in human societies. But imagine all human beings, from the beginning of all time, always feeling loving and always feeling loved. Do you think there would be an idea of love? Nobody would ever have thought of it. It's just like air—people only think about it when it is missing, or polluted. If love is there all the time, people wouldn't even have the notion that anything like love exists. People have the notion about love because it is lost, because we get separated from it. But when love is completely realized, the person who loves does not feel she is loving, the person who gives does not feel she is giving. They do it and they don't think of it. There is no need for these ideas. We need these ideas because we are still not complete. We are still ignorant about reality, about the truth. We need these concepts because we are immature and incomplete.

Sometimes I find myself using simple language, straightforward and down to earth. I think it is much better than using language like enlightenment, God, divine guidance—all these big concepts that actually scare the hell out of us. They are words that somebody created to correspond with certain experiences, but if you use these words, you unconsciously attach all sorts of ideas and feelings to them. You hate them, you like them, you love them, you are confused by them, you are bored with them, you are conflicted about them, you judge yourself with them, you judge others with them, you do not really know what they refer to, you do not know for yourself whether they refer to anything at all. Much of your history with these words has to do with your relationship with your father, your mother, your church, your teachers, the books you read, the experiences you had in the past, and so on. The original meaning of these words is most likely completely lost to you. So I think it is better not to use them. Instead, go simply, tread lightly. Find out what is the truth, what is really here beyond teachings, beyond concepts. Find out who you are.

So really the message of peace in Easter is peace with ourselves. At least that is where we need to start.

Let's see now if you have questions...