

The Greeks called "being" *parousia* The veritable translation would be a set or cluster of significations comprising "homestead, at-homeness, a standing in and by itself, a self-enclosedness, an integral presentness or thereness." it is to just this ground that we must strive to come home ("homecoming" is, as we shall see, both the process and the goal of authentic being).

— George Steiner

Everything comes forth from Being. Synonyms for Being, that is, Being expressed in other words, are: essence, existence, truth, prime constituent, vital principle, spirit, quiddity, life, nature. Whatever I produce issues from my being. "The ten thousand things are born of being." All of my doings are predicated on my being. My actions are manifestations of being. Being is the constant in the process of life itself. Doing is an accomplishment of being. "The way to do is to be" points me homeward in my every activity, my every deed, for what I intend to bring about must first be grounded in my being. This is so no matter what arena of my humanity I am operating in at any given moment, e.g., if I am to achieve a powerful action in the treatment room I must stand in my own life present to the truth of my life. The "doing" of the treatment, then, becomes an expression of being. The action of treatment becomes a response to the request of the patient for guidance in a way of life harmonious to being whole, to being Home in herself. In this context of being, in the standing in the veracity of nature, doing is spontaneous, effortless. My actions correlate freely and naturally with my patient as we dive deep into the habitat of our being, of what could be called the well of being.

In this dance of doing-being, the tale of the cook called Ting is a superb illustration. Cook Ting is cutting up an ox for Lord Hui of Wen, and his every movement is in concert with his every other movement, likened to the "dance of the

mulberry grove." Lord Hui is moved by this excellence and inquires as to how skill can reach such perfection. Cook Ting lays his knife down and says: "That which I prize is Tao, and Tao goes beyond skill. When first I began to cut up an ox I saw only the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the ox, and now it is through the spirit that I make my approach and not through the physical sight. Senses and understanding cease and the spirit takes over the action. I rely on the principles of nature, strike where there are great spaces, follow through the hidden openings, accept things as they are, never touching the ligaments and tendons, much less the main joints. There is no hacking. My knife has lasted nineteen years and has cut up several thousand oxen, and yet the blade is as if it had just left the whetstone. There is space between the joints and the knife-edge has no thickness. If what is without thickness enters where there is space, there is plenty of room." "How excellent," said the Lord of Wen, "by listening to the words of cook Ting I have learned to take care of my life."

"The spirit takes over the action" is another way of saying the being takes over the doing. "It is through the spirit that I make my approach" is a constituent of this man's mastery. His excellence and power as a butcher are derived from his essential being, his spirit. From there the "hidden openings" appear and the "great spaces" become his navigation tool. He does not hack and he does not cut. He is home with his action. The doer and the deed are one. He is the "dance of the mulberry grove," being and doing in perfect harmony. In this moment, in this mastery, all struggle and effort resolve. The Lord of Wen listens and in the listening openings and spaces "appear" from the cook's words giving rise to an amazing assertion from the Lord: "I have learned to take care of my life." Here is mastery begetting mastery, being begetting being, an act of healing, wholing, transformation, a following of the principles of nature. To take care of life is to be at home in life, present to our own being. Everything is an exercise in being, life present to life in the putting in of a

needle, the plucking of a guitar string, the perceiving of a work of art, the peeling of an orange, the paying of a bill, the penetration of a lover, the pageantry of a pain. So be it. So be all of it. The great cosmic Doing is a hierophany of Being; humanity's endeavor is a sacred showing, hallowed manifestation for/to/of Life.

Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!
Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!
The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy! The nose
is holy!
Everything is holy! everybody's holy! everywhere is holy!
Holy forgiveness! mercy! charity! faith! Holy! Ours! bodies!
suffering! magnanimity!

— Allen Ginsberg

Infinite conversations open up from here: one is the seeming impossibility that "space" can come into view in something so ostensibly dense as the flesh of an ox. What is this phenomenon? Where must I be looking for an "opening" to appear? How must I be looking? Into what eyes and what ears can transformation show itself? Alan Watts noted that "the human body contains so much empty space that its ponderable elements could be condensed to the size of that very pinpoint, for its apparent solidity is an illusion arising from the rapid motion of its atomic components—as when a spinning propeller seems to become an impenetrable disk." What will it take for me to open up the illusion of density and closedness, to open to the diaphany of the physical world, the showing-through of openness? What is required of me to live life as an opening? to create openings? to see no obstructions? What does it take for me to "be" an opening? to be at one with all my actions? to be in perfect harmony, no hacking, no cutting, simply being present to the opening again and again and again and again?

What am I doing when I am doing acupuncture? Who am I being in the doing? Into what am I putting the needle? Into

nothing, no thing, into space, an opening called human being? Into the earth of a heavenly being? Into the heaven of an earthly being? Are we all, as Rilke says, "Angels," beings in whom "the transformation of the visible into the invisible, which we are accomplishing, already appears in its completion"

A young woman named Jane is one of my patients. She came for treatment originally because a friend told her she could get some help for her painful menstruations and her struggles with food and weight. Those were her main complaints, the cause of her plaintive cries for support; yet when I asked her what she wanted more than anything else from treatment, she said, "I want my husband and my daughter to know how much I love them, how much their lives give me my life." She spoke as though she were "dawning," hearing herself give voice to the subsisting love and opening for life that she already is. She heard herself speak, and in her speaking I too could hear her promise to life. For Jane treatment has become a basic life support as she lives into her promise and grapples with daily issues, as she looks for the "openings" in life moment by moment. As for her symptoms, her periods are easier and she experiences herself as less moody. She struggles still with her weight, yet she has lightened up about food, enjoying it enough even to take up a gourmet cooking class. I have been treating her mostly via the Fire Element. She has much more access to life as joyful, as already accomplished. She lives from the home that she is for life. She is complete as is. She is a human being.

Another conversation generated from the chapter theme, "the way to do is to be," is an ongoing exploration of the question "What is required for mastery, for being present to life and accepting what is so?" There is a story from Chuang Tze to illustrate this conversation—it is the story of Old Camelback, who was a highly successful gardener. People wanted to know the secret of his success, but he denied having any particular method other than fostering natural tendencies, that is, forwarding life. He said, "In planting

trees, be careful to set the roots straight, to smooth the earth around, to use good mould and to ram it down well. Then, don't touch the trees, don't think about them, don't go and look at them, but leave them alone to take care of themselves and nature will do the rest. I only avoid trying to make trees grow—others are forever running backwards and forwards to see how they are growing, sometimes scratching them to make sure they are still alive, or shaking them to see if they are sufficiently firm in the ground, thus constantly interfering with the natural bias of the tree and turning their affection and care into an absolute bane and curse. I only don't do these things. That's all."

Trusting in nature and encouraging what is natural constitute Old Camelback's success. He does not try. He simply doesn't do things to the trees. He does nothing. He gives them good birth, then lets them be, knowing the trees will grow themselves and be true to their own nature, thus making him a great gardener. To forward life requires trust, a recognition of partnership, a willingness to be at home with all living things, a commitment to the human conversation of stewardship, a seeing into the nature of everything.

Another question inherent in this conversation is the question of cause. I think it is fair to say that when something occurs we are always asking, How come? What caused it? Why? Yet even if we can get a "because," there is a further "why" and a further "because." We can ask for a long, long time what is the cause of sickness? And we can come up with causes. In fact, history is full of explanations for illness, rife with theories, and rampant with interpretations, stories of "How come?" ranging from the wrath of the gods to the promiscuity of germs, to the latest in advanced high-tech diagnoses, physical and psychological. We all have our interpretations. Acupuncture does too, and yet at the fundus of all the rationale, what we can say about sickness is that it is, or perhaps more accurately, *something* is and we call it *sickness*. We take it itself as a starting point. From there we begin an investigation, creating interpretations as we go to

enable us to say that the phenomenon we call sickness is open to continual knowing—and *unknowing*.

Another topic, I would say a gripping topic, around which big theories of cause grow is "healing." What causes it? What's the reason for it? Beyond all the possible explanations advanced so far, what *is* is that something occurs and we call it healing. It may be that all we can ever do is interpret and keep creating interpretations that enliven and empower us to engage in the phenomenon of healing, of sickness, of whatever life theme grips us. Like Socrates we can investigate the manifestations, the phenomena of life through what amount to unanswerable questions, knowing that we do not know, not knowing if we ever will know, yet willing to live into the inquiry which brings us ever alive to the phenomenon and all the inherent phenomena that life is. The Why?, How?, What caused it?, What's the reason for life itself? are superseded by the presence and possibility of life; and a question to gain entrance to presence and possibility may be not Why, but What, is life? What am I present to when what I call life is present?

I *be* in life. I *do* in life. Life is, at the least, paradox. It is unspeakable. Concepts will not bear it. It is our residence. Truth is at the heart of it. It is home. As T. S. Eliot says, "there is a lifetime burning in every moment" with the seeming impossibility of apprehending "the point of intersection of the timeless with time." Life is home. We dwell in life. All of the great questions in human history live here. We are arriving where we are and being home in the face of all circumstance, in the face of death, of life, of the intersections of survival and creation. Being is home. From my being comes my doing simply and easily, just in the process of life itself—Source eternally present, issuing forth continuously, epiphany of One in many.

And all is always now

— T. S. Eliot

I am heading home and I am already home. I am journeying in wholeness, dancing the duality of One, the YinYang partnership. My world is made up of twos: on one hand, yet on the other . . . presence, absence . . . ups and downs . . . fronts and backs . . . tops and bottoms . . . yes and no . . . being and becoming . . . leaving and returning . . . living and dying . . . you and me. Human life manifests in partnership from the very beginning as sperm and egg coming together. One in two.

He enters looking for her—searching past his brothers as she waits expectantly in the antechamber knowing that he is on his way. He finds her. She embraces him. They meet and are perfect for one another. The union destroys an old boundary and creates a new one. Neither knows where the other starts and stops. They become something they were not. They are a mystery, a completion of one another, a passionate mitosis as they travel together to a safe place—their lodging—their home. They grow together helping each form structures and internal powers—purposeful and detailed in their journey. Corded to their dwelling, they are safely connected, held and nourished, wandering freely within bounds of their anchor.

And so they grow—fluid within fluid—a paradise of intimate communion and vast weaving—until they grow as big as their dwelling will allow. In the urgency of a greater call, wistful echoes of their first meeting are heard. It is time now. The next part of the journey beckons to them. Where they are they can go no further, and so, on the threshold of new life their old home holds them tight, hugs and squeezes and moves them lovingly and laboriously out of her with a power equal to their own. They are afraid. They are angry. They are eager and excited, expectant and joyous. They are sad. They feel for one another comforting and consoling. They find their route and in noble majesty they exit and enter in union. They crown as one. “All the Universe resounds with the joyful cry I am.”*

*“The Story of a Sperm and Egg: YinYang Seeds of a Lifetime,” by Dianne M. Connelly, in the Spring 1981 *Journal of Traditional Acupuncture*, p. 17.

The human being is born into the swim of human experience and interpretation, into the continual interplay of one thing with another, into the dance of stories, cycles, rhythms, seasons, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, colors, emotions, into the constantly changing, unfolding, revolving, evolving life of other human beings—human beings all crying “I am” in as many voices as there are human beings. The one who has emerged from two enters a world in which she is already dependent on partnership for her very life. At least one other “I am” becomes her partner in the dance, or she dies. In the beginning the one she comes to call mother is her first partner. Home and mother are interchangeable. We human beings have left the insides of the mother to create a home outside her.

To explore is to penetrate . . . the world is the insides of the mother . . .

— Norman O. Brown

We have moved from belly to arms and lie flesh against flesh, still at home, yet distinct as two. This begins our dance of duality, our two-part harmony, our duet of self and other. We are not always one with her now. She does not take us with her everywhere. She is not always present. I cry and I cry for her. I do not know how to be with her absence. If she is my home and she is gone, where am I? Where is home? I begin my search, this human being’s quest for home.

All interpretation is to conquer a remoteness, a distance . . .

— Paul Ricoeur

Consciousness, they say, begins with distance, with a baby’s new sense of separateness from the world, and pain in our remoteness from the objects of desire. Beyond the close boundaries of our own small bodies the universe spins away, and we start trying to understand it; to go home again. In fact, we have just created that home by our very distance from it,

without which it—the center—would not exist. “The home that is nowhere, that is the true home,” said a Chinese adept.

— Thomas Buckley

In one of my children’s books called *Are You My Mother?* by P. D. Eastman, a baby bird comes out of its egg. In the meantime mama bird has gone to get some food for baby. Baby looks all over asking “Where is my mother?”, falls out of his tree and begins the search for his mama. He goes to a kitten, a hen, a dog, a cow, a boat, a plane and a big machine he calls a “snort,” asking each in turn “Are you my mother?” “Where am I?” said the baby bird. “I want to go home! I want my mother!” Eventually, eventually he finds her and, in finding her, he is home.

We are homesick for ourselves and for each other. As we enter the great human company at the moment of birth the world of humanity becomes my home first represented by the one I call mother. She is my first partner in my life’s journey. In her presence I am home. In her absence I am wanderer. I seek and seek her everywhere. I am homesick for her and for myself. With her partnership I explore the world, and greet creation.

This conversation is not intended as a paean to mother, yet it is a hymn to life and how life manifests in partnership, whatever that partnership be: parent-child, lover-beloved, friend-friend, husband-wife, sister-brother, teacher-student, patient-practitioner, employee-employer, self-other. Partnership is the basis for all relationship. We have no existence apart from one another. You are the world for me, and I for you.

We are the world. We are home for each other. We move between certainty and uncertainty, valleys and peaks, hard patches and easy patches, storms and calms, before and afters, comings and goings, always home.

One depends on two to illuminate it, just as two depend on one for their meaning. One and two do not alter one another.

They exhibit and express each other. The unity of life is never altered. This dance turns up everywhere, beginning at the first moments of movement from womb-woman to womb-world. As a fruit of the womb of woman, I am delivered already dancing, already the dance. My heart beats. My breath comes and goes. My “I” is distinguished from those who birthed me. We are separate, yet I am recognized as human. I cry. The force of life exhibits itself in my flailings. I am life. I am life with no categories. I am at the centre of human being, a being at home exploring the contours of this new “world” dwelling. I am the world, all-encompassing, enfolding. Then, I begin to make boundaries, draw distinctions, create otherness and forget that all of it is home, that I am home. To speak and to share I create categories which in combination give a composite expression of home. I begin to see that I make my world up of twos as a way of speaking about life, as a way of speaking about the goings-on at home. “Twoness” gives partnership which opens up the possibility of union. In my oneness, my integer, arises a squawking for “other,” a call from my integrity that demands responses to the call.

As he hastens between them (Yin and Yang), the pilgrim unites the two poles within himself. Duality, which is the source of all movement and all phenomena, must constantly return—or be returned—to Unity, its origin and its end.

— Gai Eaton

My struggle and my strength arise from the same source, and exhibit one another. The world that I am summons me to make room for the expression of the whole, for every realm of human experience, for the one and the many. If healing is about being whole, then every expression of being wants acknowledgment, including the things I don’t like. Most of us hide out, and where we hide out is in the thought that if we did not hide we would not be acceptable, that there are parts of me that do not belong in the whole, parts that are not an

expression of being in the womb-world. Our illnesses are born and bred on not recognizing ourselves, on not seeing that we are always already home while en route. If we are willing to take another human being with us to our secret places, to the places where we deny or do not recognize ourselves, then in the moment of arriving to our "secret" we enter ourselves newly. The person we allow to come with us, the intimate traveling companion, comes without adding anything or taking anything away, comes silently, empty and following exactly. The healing is the discovery of the self. It is the homecoming, the returning home, the restoring of all lost parts.

All things come home at eventide,
like birds that weary of their roaming.
And I will hasten to thy side, Homing.

— Old English Song

As I am writing this I experience what I call excitement and joy, excitement and joy in the face of homing. In a day's time I am lost and found over and over again. Forgetting and recalling myself over and over. The kingdom of illness is designed on a pattern of forgetting, a forgetting that has gotten stuck, a forgetting that seems to have no remembering, a forgetting that would have us be lost to ourselves, a forgetfulness of being. So, if I take you to my forgetting, to my sickness, and you bring your self as guide, as coach, as practitioner, once more I come home, and see that I have been home all along, and that my illness has been instrumental in leading me there one more time. I interpret the everlasting comings and goings of the dance of life, the alternating forgettings and rememberings, the endless agonies and ecstasies of daily life. The story of the Taoist farmer illustrates a way of interpreting the dance of life's events:

The farmer's horse ran away. That evening the neighbors gathered to commiserate with him since this was such bad

luck. He said, "May be." The next day the horse returned, but brought with it six wild horses, and the neighbors came exclaiming at his good fortune. He said, "May be." And then, the following day, his son tried to saddle and ride one of the wild horses, was thrown, and broke his leg. Again the neighbors came to offer their sympathy for his misfortune. He said, "May be." The day after that, conscription officers came to the village to seize young men for the army, but because of the broken leg the farmer's son was rejected. When the neighbors came in to say how fortunately everything had turned out, he said, "May be."

— Lieh Tze, as told by Alan Watts

Home is all embracing, a continuous inclusion of all events: this too and this too and this too and this too. Home en route. Home is the place from which I have come and to which I return. Home is where I always am. All circumstances call me to new steps in the dance. All sickness points me there. All sickness is homesickness. All healing is homecoming. Sharing moves me homeward.

CHAPTER THREE

The Practice Of Being Home

(To teachers, i.e., practitioners)

In You, who'er you are, my book perusing,
In I myself—in all the World—these ripples flow,
All, all, toward the mystic Ocean tending.

— Walt Whitman

Our knowledge that we shall not pass this way again—
almost unbearable—although it makes
each moment precious in itself,
strikes even deeper if we come to feel
the signs and patterns of the mystical
on every tree and bush and turning wheel.

— Dick Allen

As we live, we are transmitters of life.
.....

Give, and it shall be given unto you
is still the truth about life.
.....

It means kindling the life-quality where it was not,
even if it's only in the whiteness of a washed pocket-
handkerchief

— D. H. Lawrence

Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but that it is.

— Ludwig Wittgenstein

This chapter, "The Practice of Being Home," is at the heart of this whole book. The practice of being home is the action of the mystic, the bringing of the mystical into the realm of everyday activities—not mystical as mysterious, but mystical as daily awe-inspiring; mystical as fundamental in the moment to moment universe; mystical as the only possible context to hold the whole, given the multitudinous manifestations that comprise it. The mystical lives in the field of daily action, the training ground of all creature activity. "In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action." (Dag Hammarskjöld) Without daily action, without the living in the "unbearable precious," our life becomes merely a belief and a study, not a living and being alive and in awe, except in rare moments in which we can do no other.

The treatment room and all that is brought to bear there, all of the magnificent, simple tools of diagnosis—the askings and listenings and seeings and touchings—are all reachings-in to the human being; they reach beyond life as a study, to life as the very field of action of One, of the Mystical, no matter what the symptom or the reason the person has come for treatment. The practitioner-mystic does not stop to ques-

tion the bounds of her own or her patient's ordinariness or extraordinariness. Rather, following the words of Chuang Tze ("Leap into the boundless and make it your home."), she leaps into the boundless with her patient and together they make it their home. Likewise, though speaking from a different tradition, St. Basil says: "The human person is a creature that has received the commandment to become God." The treatment room is our daily invitation to creation. It is an ongoing call into existence through, with, and beyond all the present conditions and circumstances.

In being alive and in awe, the practitioner-mystic is in love with the One, the Integrity inherent in all she finds in the field that is her own life, her patient's life and all life. She summons us to take part in evolution, to give our attention to creating life, to returning to the origin of everything, to returning ourselves to creation, to exploring the original inspiration.

The practice of being home is the practice of living paradox, being human yet commanded to be God, being bounded yet summoned to leap into the boundless, kindling life-quality in every action be it grand or humble, living the Way of the Tao by not doing anything in particular, being separate and at one with the entire creation.

One day when I was feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed and I cried and I run all round the house. I knew just what it was. In fact, when it happen, you can't miss it.

— Shug, in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

The same paradox of living, the paradox of the mystical, is referred to by T. S. Eliot in "Burnt Norton":

The dance along the artery
The circulation of the lymph
Arc figured in the drift of stars

What courses through us courses through all of nature, that is, the perpetual movement of life. "Attention to nature is life in action." (Ortega y Gasset) We fall endlessly into ourselves action after action regardless of the particular room of human activity—the classroom, livingroom, boardroom, bathroom, bar room, guest room, family room, bedroom, music room, treatment room. We are with ourselves wherever we go, not even aware of how much life is living us, gripping and training us, how much we are one with all else, how much every symptom houses a life theme found not just there in the symptom's plaintive cry.

The theme of the mystic is always and everywhere potently available. I am reminded of the kid in the movie *The Karate Kid*. His daily discipline houses the very abstractions of karate that he espouses and he does not see that this is so until he is called into action. At the moment the teacher confronts him, the boy is astonished to see that he is already home, already accomplished. He has been learning by living, by following the instruction of the one he has chosen as guide, teacher, coach. The paradox of practice is the paradox that all is in all, that the flow of life is evidenced in everything and in nothing in particular, in the guest house of the mystic, the whiteness of a washed pocket handkerchief, in all the events of the whole day long. The practice of being home is an ongoing kindling of the life quality. It is the practice of finding our way home in every moment, every condition, every symptom and every circumstance. It is the continuous underbelly of being human. It is the place of the mystic. The practice of being home is being home.

Who ever reads me will be in the thick of the scrimmage, and if he doesn't like it—if he wants a safe seat in the audience—let him read somebody else

— D. H. Lawrence

There is no "safe seat in the audience." What we are addressing here is the adventure of being alive, the being in

the "thick of the scrimmage" at all times. There is no respite from life, no stopping. There is peace and stillness possible only in the heart of the action. Storm and turbulence are daily fare too. There is no security. We are always at risk.

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.

— Helen Keller

Circumstances would not in themselves be cause for knowing we are home. In the midst of daily perturbations we are hard pressed to practice being home, hard pressed to "see" that all expressions of life, including the tumult, the wrangles, the irritants, are the field of the mystical, are the expressions of One. In the "thick of the scrimmage" it is often hard for us, the players, to remember what we are doing here, hard to get in the presence of life. Coaching, then, becomes crucial to a player committed to the conscious moment-to-moment taking on of life. Coaching becomes the wake-up call from one whose vision of the possibilities of the game is a match for the greatness of the player.

To the practitioner-coach, the patient is a player in the heart of the scrimmage of her own life, committed to taking her life on. The same is true for the teacher: the student is the chief protagonist for her own life. The teacher becomes coach in the adventure of the student's life, just as for the patient, the practitioner becomes coach for the patient's life. The coaches also have coaches, their teachers and practitioners, their mentors of the mystical, who assist them in the practice of being home, of taking on their lives in every possible way. And, in turn, the patients and students become coaches for others to be home. When I treat one person, another family member will thank me for the new life she, and often the whole family experiences, as a result of that one person's homecoming. I see that as one family member

“arrives” she becomes the occasion of arrival for the entire family. She ushers them all home. And then they too act as life support for everyone around them. In this way treatment is public. People become guides for the lives of those around them. I envision concentric circles of creation, human being to human being, the heart of the mystic to the heart of the mystic, giving life. This is how life grows: one person influencing another. It is certainly how a practice grows.

Now, let's speak of one we would call teacher, coach, guide, mystic—that is, practitioner—and the action we would call teaching, coaching, guiding, awe-inspiring—that is, practicing. It is fitting to have this topic as part of the chapter on “The Practice of Being Home,” fitting because we are addressing all practice, not just my practice which is traditional acupuncture. The specific practice, the specific line of life action, be it medicine, history, football, parenting, writing—all human endeavor—requires us to be living in residence with ourselves using every event and every person to teach, coach, guide and inspire. In our training program at the Traditional Acupuncture Institute, though the content is traditional acupuncture, the context is human homing. I suggest that all practice of anything has humanity being at home with itself as its underlying intent, its context, its living philosophy—and humanity being at home with itself is awesome. Without awe, astonishment, breathtaking wonder, life withers and dies while we are still alive. Without awe we are not at home.

“Astonishment is the beginning of philosophy” is an assertion of many philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, and Heidegger.

Live in a perpetual great astonishment.

— Theodore Roethke

Late on the third day, at the very moment when, at sunset, we were making our way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase, “Reverence for Life.”

— Albert Schweitzer

The highest point a man can attain is not knowledge . . . but something even greater, more heroic . . . Sacred Awe!

— Nikos Kazantzakis

. . . . You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
Than an order of words

— T. S. Eliot

Explanation separates us from astonishment, which is the only gateway to the incomprehensible.

— Eugene Ionesco

A teacher creates worlds. Each world created is a sacred vessel. As Roethke defines the word, “Teacher: one who carries on her education in public.” She creates by giving voice and giving silence, by speaking words and listening from whence the words come. She can not be teacher-coach-awe-inspirer without giving herself away, without opening to her own astonishing aliveness, without publicly wondering and wandering in her own beginner's mind.

“Don't say: create.” These words from Roethke express the promise of one's life as teacher. Life is awesome, awe-filled. She teaches from awe, and not from her opinions, beliefs, advice. She does whatever will forward the life of the one or ones she is coaching. “Teach as an old fishing guide takes out a beginner.” (Roethke) She lives at the edge of life as a creative act, continuous and evolving, not infre-

quently terrified of her own godliness; not infrequently enraptured by the joy and fun of it all; always grappling with her own humanity. "When you discard arrogance, complexity, and a few other things that get in the way, sooner or later you will discover that simple, childlike, and mysterious secret known to those of the Uncarved Block: Life is Fun." (Benjamin Hoff, *The Tao of Pooh*)

She provides a compelling invitation, an urgency to all her listeners to open now in this moment, here in this place, not some other day, some other where. This is the holy moment, the holy place, the holy you. Three classical imperative questions provoke us: If not now, then when? If not here, then where? If not you, then who? The teacher-coach calls us home again and again and again to this is it, life is now, right here, through me, through you, and not just where our skin begins and ends. She urges us to live doing everything for the last time. The teacher summons us to remind each other of the unconditional holiness, wholeness, intactness of our lives, and of life itself. She insists that we teach by giving ourselves, our history, our knowings, our seeings and listenings away. The teacher imparts a body of distinctions to empower the student to live, and to live not so much by helping, but by giving herself away. "Give a person a fish—he eats for a day. Teach a person to fish—he eats for a life time."

There are times when it becomes impossible for me to teach. No matter where I look I see only God, wearing so many masks, playing in so many forms. Who is the teacher then? Who is to be taught?

— Swami Prabhavanda

For the teacher-coach-practitioner, life manifests as dance, as walking the circle in daily steps familiar and unfamiliar. The coach is the creator of context for the entire dance, for all the steps. She is not "stuck" on any one way. She knows she has no answer to give. She also knows that as teacher she is student, learning to be home herself in all the domains of

her life. Homing is wanted everywhere. She is a protagonist for life, an antagonist for anything other. The teacher-mystic is an inquirer, an instigator of inspiration, committed to aliveness—this is so regardless of the content to be taught, or the material to be covered. What we "know" always derives from unknowing, that is, from standing open to life's phenomena, open to the "ten thousand things." The teacher-poet Theodore Roethke says: "All knowledge lives in paradox," and "All roads lead to the self . . ." Behind every knowing is the thrust of life itself as we human beings reach to embrace it and in many instances reach to capture it, that is, to capture ourselves. Teacher, like a maestro, conducts us through every knowing, through every piece of music, back to music itself, to life itself, from whence we come. Life transparently grounds every knowing, every subject, every teaching. Teacher calls us awake beyond the readily apparent and points us all, including herself, homeward.

Henri Bergson, a philosopher of history, addresses this theme, this practice of being home, though in different words in the following passage:

The soul of the great mystic does not come to a halt at the [mystical] ecstasy as though that were the goal of a journey The great mystic has felt the truth flow into him from its source like a force in action His desire is with God's help to complete the creation of the human species The mystic's direction is the very direction of the "elan" of life. It is that "elan" itself, communicated in its entirety to privileged human beings whose desire it is thereafter to set the imprint of it upon the whole of mankind

To practice is to put into action. To practice being home is to put home into action. It is the practice of the mystic to be home and bring awe to the day, every day, simply being in the presence of life itself. The home of the mystic is the realm of the teacher-practitioner, the kingdom of human being. The practice of being home—here, now, as is, at one—is an ongoing way of being a human being.