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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN

Shambhala Teachings: Primordial Confidence

Chicago, Illinois

Talk Two of Two

November 21, 1987

VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN:

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome again to this short presentation of Shambhala teaching. I assume that you have been practicing the discipline of meditation today, so therefore you have some experience of what we were discussing last night. And by way of that discussion and by way of your experience, I thought I might talk about the difference between real confidence and false confidence. Real confidence and false confidence is different, like a glass which is just a glass, and a glass which is broken, a broken glass.

Confidence which depends upon a cause is like a memory which we keep on recalling whenever we want to feel a certain way. Memories themselves are not bad or good, but when we use them to prop up our sense of who we are, then they become like that glass.

I think real confidence is more like broken glass. I hope that's not too shocking, but it's true.

Real confidence is more like broken glass than it is like the glass which has a particular shape. When we think about confidence we think, "Well, confidence should never be shattered." And that's true: confidence should never be shattered. However, unless we can experience a broken heart then I don't think we can ever have real confidence. Unless we can actually see our whole structure, our dreamlike structure, in pieces, then I don't think we can ever have real confidence. If we do have confidence in the solidity of things, like our favorite cup or favorite glass, then we will always be afraid because that glass can sooner or later be shattered, somehow be broken. But if we feel that quality of breaking apart then we are in

some real way in touch with our own goodness, basic goodness, our own gentleness. It takes a tremendous amount of understanding not to make too much of our own existence. It takes a tremendous amount of understanding not to try to keep everything so solid all the time.

So a shattered glass is like a broken heart. And a broken heart is like the warrior's basic sense of being, like a pigeon egg. Have you ever seen a pigeon egg? It's this big. It has a very fine shell. All it would take is just a [blows or taps on microphone?] little touch and it would splinter and break apart. Same way with our own mentality and our own sense of being. It is so fragile and so thin, in a certain way, so almost not existent, that if we touch it and push on it, even just a little bit, it starts to crack. And then it cracks and then it breaks apart. That's the warrior's confidence. That experience is the birth of confidence and actually is the confidence itself. That tender heart, that little pigeon egg heart that we have, is the only thing that prevents us from becoming maniacs, prevents us from becoming hardnosed stupid people who just want to have our way all the time, all the time. That possibility of having our heart broken, cracked and splintered is the only thing that prevents us from being completely out of touch with our own basic goodness. Now, this kind of existence that the warrior lives is something that cannot be compared to anything else. It cannot be bargained for, and it cannot be sort after, and it cannot be traded in a marketplace. This kind of existence is very soft, very fragile, at the same time very fundamental, very real. Can you imagine taking your heart as a pigeon's egg and sort of twirling it around in your fingers, just moving it around without dropping it, knowing that if you dropped it, it would splatter, break completely? If we have that kind of feeling then we begin to have real confidence. Now, how do the two things work together? We have a totally fragile situation all the time, and we have real confidence because of that. That's what we mean by discipline in the Shambhala teaching. That's what we mean by having basic goodness and primordial confidence together, at once, at the same time. The warrior who has understood even to a small degree the notion of basic goodness

has a feeling of tenderness which cannot be bought or sold. It cannot be influenced by the things of the world. It cannot be manipulated to create fame or fortune. The warrior who is in touch with basic goodness knows that all of life is so fragile that any minute it can be dropped and can fall apart. That kind of heart is a very sad heart. That kind of mentality is a very sad mentality, because when you know that then you feel always brokenhearted. You always feel sad because you can't really protect, you can't really juggle that very fragile little pigeon's heart all the time. And you can't make it into something else. You can't say, "Well, I'm going to put the latest and greatest poly-coating on this pigeon's heart," whatever it is, the latest chemical compound so that it's indestructible: you can throw it off a building, you can throw a, you know, a vacuum cleaner on it and it's never going to break. That's what the setting sun world tells us all the time, "Just do this," "Put this on your plate," "Just put this over your heart," "Just keep painting it – it'll never break." But that's just purely another fantasy, another lie. The truth of the matter is, it will break. It will shatter. Anytime you come in contact with a situation which is real, your heart is going to break. That's not really bad, by the way. In fact, that's the beginning of real confidence, because when your heart breaks you know what it means to be good, what it feels like to be good beyond your mind, beyond your thoughts, beyond your ideas. What it feels to be basically good, you feel it. You feel it. And that can only happen when there's a crack, and that crack begins to splinter and you begin to see your world fall apart. Now, I'm not talking about some kind of fatalistic notion. I'm talking about real experience that we all have. When we can't hold it together there is such tenderness, there is such broken-heartedness, that we feel sad. We have no choice but to feel sad. And then we try to patch it together. And we can't. And that's where we begin to discover what confidence is, primordial confidence which doesn't need to be patched together. When we begin to live our life in such a way that we don't have to patch it back up if it falls apart, then we become confident. Then we start to feel what it's like to be

like the earth, like the sky, like wind, or like rain, like sunshine, or like clouds. We begin to feel what it's like to just be simple, pure being. Then we start to get tough. We start to get tough in the sense that that experience of sadness or of broken-heartedness is in itself confident, in itself is more than confident. We could say it's delightful. Sooner or later the umbilical cord has to be cut. The problem with most of us is we continue to deceive ourselves about pleasure and pain, and happiness and sadness. We continue to think that we should have one and not the other, and therefore we go on making one mess after another: running after what we think is good for us, running away from what we think is bad for us, and then those things switching around. Well, we should be more trusting than *that*. We should have more trust in ourselves than that. We should have more faith, so to speak, in our own goodness than *that*. We shouldn't be in a position where we have to deal, bargain—not just bargain—but to cheat reality, cheat with reality. You know? Like we always think that we're going to make it somehow if we put down the right amount of money, or if we press the right button, or if we do it right, you know, we sell out before the market crashes. Whatever. We're going to do it right. We're going to cheat the reality somehow so that we don't have to feel any broken-heartedness at all. And we call that some sort of confidence. But that is not confidence. Real confidence is letting go completely of our fixed notion, letting go completely about having to deceive ourselves about what's actually happening. Well, what is happening? What's happening is there is a lot of pleasure and there's a lot of pain. There are a lot of good things and a lot of bad things. And they're all happening at once, so it seems. And we as human beings feel lost because we can't get a handle on one or the other, at least long enough to say, "Well, this is what I feel," "This is what I want to do." If you look at anything that happens in our life and check out the sort of historical progression of your life, you can see that you never had that much time to get a handle on anything. Not that much time so that you could say, "Well, I really believe this," "This is what I believe," "This is

what I feel like and this is what I am. And I'm going to stick with this forever and ever. And therefore, when I get enough money [laughter], I'll build a proper mousetrap." We can't deceive ourselves, ladies and gentlemen. There's really no way we can protect ourselves from the real experience of life, which is always good and bad, which is always happy and sad, which is always pleasurable and painful. There's no way we can try to corner the market on one particular experience and say, "Well, that's it for me," and, "I've got it, I'm going to go the rest of the way, and then I'll..." what? The real confidence is very scary because it has to be happy and sad at once. That's because to begin with, things are basically without any problem. Things are basically as they are, you know: the rain, and the wind, and the earth, and the sky, and the rest of it – basically without any problem. So that's goodness. And we know it through our experience. And when our experience is not possible to manipulate, then we know it much more so, because then we can see that it's not so much being in control that's really the point. We don't have to be in control. We don't have to be so paranoid that we think it's up to us to make sure that nothing goes wrong, or to make sure that everything goes right. When we realize that we don't have to be in control of everything, then we feel confident. And that confidence can't be described in words particularly. But it can be suggested from the point of view of viewing the bittersweet quality of life, and knowing that that bittersweet quality is okay. It doesn't have to be changed into anything else. There's sometimes happy, sometimes sad, sometimes happy-sad at the same time. So, a warrior who has begun to see things without fear, feels that quality of sadness and happiness in everything, doesn't begin anywhere, doesn't stop, doesn't end, doesn't need a particular doctrine, doesn't need a particular history. It's just our own experience: who we are, as we are. It's so wonderful, so delightful, and so sad. And that creates an attitude—not an attitude, more than an attitude—it creates a vision, vision. Almost like something occurs, that's a vision. When something occurs. And that which occurs is called confidence, in Tibetan, *ziji*.

That which occurs from that experience of happiness and sadness simultaneously is a feeling of a light or brilliance or splendor, some kind of primordial dignity which is so bright and so vivid that it sort of illuminates every aspect of life; lightens up all the corners of one's existence so that everything is seen so vividly and clearly, that it is possible to make some connection with the rest of the world. Unless that experience happens, we never make a connection with the rest of the world. We're always talking about it but we don't do it. Unless we experience *ziji*, confidence, brilliance, and splendor which is based on happy-sad primordial goodness, then we can't ever think about making our life some vehicle for making this world into a harmonious society. We can never think about actually creating a simple and basic organic situation, which is society, that works for everybody's benefit at once. We'll never be able to do that, ladies and gentlemen, unless we experience that brilliance of confidence which is based on a sad and tender heart. But once we do, then there is nothing that can stop us; there is nothing that can get in the way of making this particular world into an enlightened world or a harmonious world. There is nothing that can get in our way: not aggression, and not passion, not deviousness, or thievery, or any of the kinds of trickery that are involved in the setting sun world. None of that can get in our way. We cannot be sidetracked by a momentary disturbance in the force. [Laughs; laughter] Sounds like it, doesn't it? The whole thing sounds like some sort of, you know, mythological approach, or, you know, some sort of storybook approach to life. However, believe me, it's very true. You just have to let go of your own feeling of having to be a coward, your own feeling of having to protect yourself from the elements, and sort of join in, basically; join into the world. It's almost like we're all waiting for each other to say, "Yes, I'll do it," "Okay, shall we?" "Okay, let's—I'll do it if you'll do it or..." [Laughter] "I love you." So this Shambhala teaching is meant to bring us in contact with our primordial nature, which is soft and hard at the same time, which makes it possible to live one's life in a warrior's way: maybe sometimes forceful,

maybe sometimes yielding, maybe sometimes just simply abiding – so many different ways of being. But still, altogether genuine, every moment, so that there is no lie, so that we have nothing to be ashamed of ever. In this short time that we have together, these ideas are simply meant as a stepping-stone to one’s personal experience or one’s personal accomplishment. If we practice meditation, sooner or later we feel really good because we don’t have to buy into habitual pattern. That’s when we feel good. If we practice a little further, we feel really shaky, because even not buying into habitual pattern is also not buying into habitual pattern, so that’s shaky. But if we stay with it then space starts to open up and the clouds disperse, and the Great Eastern Sun shines. And what we see is what has always been there. Nothing’s changed particularly – it’s just illuminated so that we can see it clearly. In this short time, I’m glad to have been able to say a few things about these teachings. And I hope that we will have the opportunity to work together further.

And now, if you care to have a discussion, since you have been sitting all day and listening to these ideas, you probably would like to say something. If you would, please go ahead.

QUESTION: [Inaudible words]

VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN: [Inaudible: What?]

Q: [Inaudible words: Is discourteousness?] to another human being, a degradation of basic goodness?

VR: Absolutely. However, if you begin to have a definition of discourteousness to another human being, you’re probably constipated. [Laughter]

Q: [Inaudible: If that’s so?], how could you answer the question?

VR: Well, it takes one to know one. [Laughter]

Q: [Inaudible words: thank you?]

VR: [Laughs]

QUESTION: Good evening, sir. I'm confused about a step. So I wondered if we could pick at the shell a little bit. You said that at the point where the eggshell breaks, there's tenderness, that that moment is coincident with primordial confidence.

VR: Precisely.

Q: I don't understand then at all.

VR: [Laughs]

Q: At the moment when that breaks, to me it feels terrible.

VR: Yes. Understood. However, what we are trying to get at here is that at the moment that that eggshell breaks, that your heart breaks, is also the moment that you lose your own defensiveness, your own sense of your own, you know, opinion, because you can't hold it any more. It begins to break. Now, I think the only way to really understand that moment is to create the atmosphere of basic goodness through sitting practice of meditation. I don't think you can understand it intellectually. I haven't understood it myself that way, nor have I met anyone who could. However, the reason I'm saying it is that in case it happens, you might remember that. In case it happens that you have a broken heart or you are insulted, or any of the things that cause your, you know, fabric of personality to split, at that moment there is a possibility of actually seeing what's real.

Q: Are you saying that that moment doesn't feel terrible?

VR: It doesn't feel like anything at all. Terrible comes later. The only thing I could say about that moment is that it's very bright, illuminating, but not illuminating anything particular.

You know, you can feel that in your own life, that even sort of ordinary things that happen to you, when something goes wrong, you know, you're disappointed or whatever it is that doesn't follow according to your plan, a kind of drop that happens. It's almost like your heart falls down; sort of like heavy. It's almost like the elevator—you know when you're in the elevator—do you ever have that feeling when it starts to drop, you know, and there's a kind

of like [gasps] feeling? You can't say what that is. You can't say it's good or bad, but it does happen, you know? All I'm saying is that that's a sort of key into primordial confidence. There are no defenses, you see? You can't bring up your defense-system of whatever it is that you're thinking about, nor can you bring up your sort of memories about what should be— what you should be thinking about right then when that happens. But it's just real, kind of, basic experience. The only thing I can say in terms of the description is that there's a feeling of sadness and electricity.

Q: [Inaudible words: So you do not?] immediately make an effort to patch it up?

VR: Sure.

Q: That would feel terrible maybe?

VR: I think that would feel really bad. I mean, usually it does. As soon as we have something that goes wrong and we jump to, you know, making it better, we never actually feel anything at all. We just sort of create a rather tense situation in our bodies.

Q: Thank you.

VR: You know, I'm not trying to be sort of philosophical about this. I'm trying to talk about what actually happens. And when we are not afraid to be honest with ourselves about our experience, I think it all—it's pretty much like what we're talking about.

QUESTION: Sir, if you would clarify something for me. It seems that there's a moment where that experience is genuine, and for me what happens is that I tend to want to jump to one side or the other. I think some of the confusion is the difference between experience that's sort of there, and emotions. I mean, because we're talking about emotions or a sense of feeling but—

VR: [Inaudible words: I don't think you have to worry about that?]. You don't have to worry about that.

Q: Are you saying, sir, that... you're saying you don't have to worry about that? [Laughter]

VR: You got it. [Laughter] That's precisely what we're talking about. I just a wasted a lot of words to say just that. [Laughter] All this talk I'm talking about is just *that*. [Addressing next questioner] Gentleman here, in the middle.

QUESTION: This question has two parts. The general one is: how do we all get here together? And the specific one was: every time that I talk to someone who is not a practitioner or— apart from saying that sitting practice is a sane thing to do, and that the more that I've practiced, the more confident I can be in saying that, when I go beyond that and try and explain what Shambhala or Buddhism is actually about, I feel like I trip all over myself and I get blank stares.

VR: I have the same experience. [Laughter] I think what happens is, how we all got here is by our mutual intent. That's how we got here, because we're mutually interested in the same things. That's how we got here. When we talk about Shambhala or meditation or whatnot and we trip all over ourselves, it's because our heart is breaking and we can't keep it together. And therefore, conventional world looks at us with a blank stare [laughter], thinking, "This person [laughs] has got to be losing it." [Laughter] "This person doesn't have much longer to go [laughter] before I don't want to have his phone number anymore." [Laughter; laughs] I would think that it's important for us to have a certain amount of confidence, you know? It really doesn't matter all that much what the conventional world thinks.

Q: Well, the more I lose it, the better I feel. [Laughter] And somehow that just widens things when I try and explain that.

VR: [Inaudible] there's a really large gap between what the setting sun world is interested in and what Shambhala warriors are interested in. Big large gap suddenly gets—it gets bigger, by the way. [Laughter] It gets bigger even from the point of view of what you eat. That's not saying that you won't have a really good hotdog, if there is a really good hotdog. [Laughter] But anyway, I would suggest that it's not necessary to work so hard at explaining what it is

that you're doing. It's not really important, you know? I mean, I think for a lot of us, you know, would-be warriors who are trying our best to explain things to others, is it's halfway between—half of it is our good intention, half of it is our clumsiness with our good intention. So we don't know exactly what to say and how to say it properly. Therefore, people look at you as if you are funny. I think at that point it's probably best to shut up, don't say too much. In fact, in some sense, you know, some of the conventional wisdom like "actions speak louder than words," that's not bad. That actually makes a lot of sense [laughs], you know. And actions in most cases, how you actually keep your body, how you sort of comb your hair, and put on your clothes, and move through space, as we talked about – that says a lot. And then if people are inquisitive, saying, "Well, what is it that you do do?" Say, "Well, I practice Shambhala Training." "Oh, what is that?" "Well, it's a discipline in terms of how to work with body and mind, and how to work with society." "Oh, what is *that*?" "Well, it has to do with basic goodness." "Basic goodness [laughs], really? [Laughter] You got to be kidding." [Laughter] "No [laughter], not kidding." [Laughs] But I think it's always good to not get into prolonged philosophical discussions about anything, because once it gets passed the first few minutes, it's just a matter of repeating. **[GAP IN RECORDING: Some words missing]...** [Laughter] And even if you do, somebody's liable to walk in just as you're [smacks lips?] [Laughter] doing it. So you have to chew on it. And the gristle part is kind of a little bit nauseating. And the same thing with anger, when you begin to chew it, you realize how nauseating it is. But you have to in order to get some reality in what it means to be angry, and how that really affects the rest of the world. Otherwise you just keep spitting all over the place, or swallowing and choking and making yourself feel bad. [Addressing audio technician] This way.

QUESTION: Is resistance to meditation laziness or not being ready to accept the teachings, or both?

VR: Mostly laziness. I think, mostly laziness. Now, you could say, “Well, what is laziness made up of?” Drowsiness, sleepiness, dreaminess – those are the three things that laziness is made up of. Drowsiness, sleepiness, dreaminess: first you get drowsy, then you fall asleep, and then you dream. [Laughter] And believe me, we don’t have to get more complicated than that. [Laughs]

QUESTION: My question is about how to apply the broken-heartedness to kind of a way of perceiving the teachings as something in the distance, or something that you can only do when you’re doing it right, or is it—can it be handled as kind of a bridge? Like I always have the problem of feeling guilty of, “I’m not doing it good enough,” or—

VR: Doing it right, yes.

Q: Right.

VR: Well, again, that’s the same thing as things breaking. You know, I remember when I was a kid, my brother and I used to fight all the time and knocked over my mother’s favorite vase, and it broke. You know? And then there was a moment when we looked at each other... as she came in, “He did it!” “He did it!” “He did it!” [Laughter] You know? “Somebody else!” In the same way, you know, when we have that guilty feeling, right, because we broke—somehow it broke, we start to blame somebody. We start to complain about something, then, “It wasn’t my fault!” “The world did it.” “My parents did it.” “My psychologist did it—no, not my psychologist [laughs]—my [laughter] priest,” or something like that: “My husband, my wife.” The point is that when it breaks, that that experience of brittleness is also at the same time so vividly real, so full in a way, that there’s really no time to feel guilty. There’s no time to feel guilty. There’s only time to experience the breaking apart of one’s own idea, and one’s own notion of, you know, just being a conventional person. See, that’s why meditation is really the most important thing in terms of creating a ground for that experience, because once you have the basis to relating to the earth, when something breaks,

you can feel it break. And then you don't have to make any excuse about being heartbroken. You can actually be heartbroken without being guilty. That's possible. It's truly possible. And that also has delight in it, which is, it's hard to explain – it's just all encompassing. It's everywhere. You feel sad and that sadness is also delight, because you know you're not lying to anybody, to anything, to yourself, or to the world. You just feel it.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: Do you think that children can and do sense primordial confidence?

VR: Do you mean, you and I?

Q: No, it was a different question than that. Do you think it's easier for younger children to sense it?

VR: I think so, because in children, they haven't been yet conditioned to the world from different points of view, such as, you know, the right side and the wrong side, and all of that. You know? And when children like ourselves, when we were younger, there was a lot of enjoyment and delight, also a lot of pain, you know. I remember getting stung by a bee when I was about eight years old, and there was something incredibly exhilarating about it.

[Laughter] I remember the smell of the flowers. I had little shorts on, and run to my mother, "Wah!" There was something very tender about it, at the same time very sharp. [Laughs]

However, we shouldn't fall into this notion that the goodness is left to the young, and the rest of us are all, argh, you know, so corrupted we can't feel it any more. I would venture to say that we all still have those feelings of being a child, no matter how old we are. There's a kind of freshness that occurs in our experience that we can't deny.

QUESTION: Earlier you said that we can't stop things from going wrong. I understand *that*.

But what I'm confused about is that—how do you know when to stop trying to make them go right?

VR: I think it just happens. It's not like there's a formula and a particular kind of experience which you can say, "Well now I know I can give that up," "Now I know I don't have to do that any more." It's not like that. It just happens to you. It's almost like suddenly you wake up. It can't be formulated.

Q: One thing I notice is that sometimes a large group of people are busy working together trying to make things go right. And they're basically tripping up over each other and no one person wants to say, "Woah, stop! Enough!" My husband's kind of tried to explain the concept of idiot compassion to me. And to keep feeding that group and not being willing to say, "No, stop. We're done. Enough," seems to me to be like idiot compassion.

VR: Well, you know, it appears to me that ordinary people like ourselves have to find out for ourselves what's really possible to do, rather than what we imagine we can do. And I think that the kind of Shambhala teachings is based on really what's possible, rather than what's imagined. And that's the kind that has to do with sort of ordinary experience, ordinary experience of human beings who wake up in the morning, who brush their teeth, who go to work, who pick up the kids, who—whatever they do. Every aspect of what they do, they are aware of it, and they know what they're doing. Group situations, right, like societies, let's say, "Well, a very nice thing to do is if we pool our resources and we all drive—each day we take it turns to drive the kids to school." That's the Great Eastern Sun vision. That's really nice. And that should happen that way, you know? I think when you get to the idiot stage of things is when you have meetings once a week to discuss what's wrong with society. You can't really look at the group and say, "Look what happened with this group!" I mean, I'm looking at this group and I know what happened today. [Laughter] And if I thought, "Well, you have passed the test, haven't you?" Well, haven't you? "You all did it. You practiced meditation today. You understood Shambhala warriorship. Let's go on from here. [Laughter] Open the doors and let's go out!" [Laughter] It doesn't work that way. There's no general

view, you know. There's no, sort of like, formula attitude for what the group should be doing. In fact, that's the problem. That's always the problem. It's like, you know, once you become a part of society then you start to think society should mold itself around you. It's very spontaneous, and also at the same time very good, if we allow each other to be open enough to express ourselves beyond guilt and beyond rigidity about what society should be. I think everybody knows what society should be. Nobody wants to cause harm unless they're completely, you know, messed up in their mind. But nobody wants to cause harm. Nobody really wants to have more than anybody else particularly, unless they get fascinated with things, and then they feel guilty anyway about having too many of them. You know, then they have to prop themselves and say, "Oh, it's okay if I have so many, because I'm really, you know, helping others by doing this, because I'm a consumer," or something like that. Or the opposite view, of the, you know, the socialistic or communistic approach that, "I'm really keeping just what need, so that everybody should have as much as I have." There is no one view of society. Society is a totally creative process in which everybody has Great Eastern Sun vision. And everybody can be who they are in their place; whatever place you sit down in, that's your place. And you make it that way. And you can have tremendous dignity in that. But when we start thinking that the good and evil of society is based on our own notion then we start to get slightly perverted, I'm afraid. That's what happens when we start to think that, well, you take any doctrine or any teaching and apply it to a group and you'll say, "This group is completely, totally wrong."

[Addressing next questioner] Ian at the back there.

QUESTION: What happens if you sit for a long time in a special position, then you start to get restless, what makes you do that?

VR: What makes you get restless? Well, nothing. Nothing makes you get restless. You just get restless. Maybe you're just not used to it, so your body starts to hurt and you want to

move around a bit. Or maybe you're thinking about something you would like to do, something else that you would like to do, like maybe something you would like to eat or [laughs] something you would like to see other than what you're doing. But there's really nothing that makes you get restless particularly, just things that occur in your mind and your body. It's not a big problem. See what I mean, Ian?

Q: Yes.

VR: You should just try not to be too stiff. If you get restless just change your position a little bit, your body. And if you're thinking too much, make sure that you're not staring at anything. [Laughter]

QUESTION: Sir, did I hear you right? Did I hear you rightly say, anytime you come into contact with a situation that's really real, your heart will break?

VR: Yes. [Laughter] You must have written it down. [Laughter]

Q: Yes I did. A few minutes ago I heard you talking with a lady, and you were saying it's when your heart breaks, then you have a situation that's really real.

VR: That's right.

Q: And it seems like the broken heart comes first.

VR: Well, not necessarily. I don't think we have to be too solid about that. It's purely evocative, in terms of my own description. But we're not really talking about chicken and the egg here. Not really. You might be surprised.

Q: I am a little. [Laughter]

VR: Well, you might be the chicken [laughter], where you thought you were the egg all the time.

Q: It feels a little less like a broken heart than kind of maybe a little fearful.

VR: Well, okay. If you want to tell me a bedtime story, I'll listen to it.

Q: I'm trying to connect with this interesting thing that you said.

VR: You know how it is. You know how it is when you're in bed and you're feeling a little bit frightened about things, and you say, "Well, it was dark and wind was blowing." What kind of fearful are you talking about?

Q: Sitting and listening to you, or picking up a microphone and talking to you. That seems like a fairly real situation. So [inaudible: I'll?] try and check out the truth of what you said.

VR: Don't get lost in space, Mr. [inaudible: Dodds?]. We're right here.

Q: It feels like an empty heart?

VR: That's right. Hello? [Laughter] That's fine.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: I know that I really don't face situations that other adults do in real life, but in high school, when I need confidence for, let's say, a test or something, as a support, when do I know when I've attained primordial confidence to face that situation?

VR: I think there are two ways you know. First of all, you know by understanding that you have prepared as much as you can. You know, you have studied your texts and whatever it is. And then by knowing that you can just let go of that, and just look at the page and see what it says. Two things: first you prepare, then you let go. And then you just look at what's there. And then you just trust yourself. You can't really, you know, you can't really cram it all in so that you memorize everything, so that you're not going to miss one little word on that test, you know. Basically, you have to prepare. But at a certain point you have to let go of the preparation, otherwise you'll be so nervous. When you let go of the preparation, you just look at the question and what does it say: "How much wood would a woodchuck chuck [laughter] if a woodchuck would wood?"

Q: If you think that you have primordial confidence, is there a chance of getting over confident?

VR: Yes. If you think you do, there's a chance. However, if you think you do, there's a chance that you won't. [Laughter] In other words, don't pay too much attention to your thoughts.

Q: [Inaudible words: Thank you, sir?]

VR: [Laughs] Sometimes you think you do. Sometimes you think you don't. When it comes right down to the moment, it's very naked. And you have to do what's there. It's good to have some preparation, some discipline. Mm. I wish I was your teacher in high school. I bet you wish I was too. [Laughs; laughter]. We could have some fun. [Laughter] We could actually have some fun. We could actually learn something about each other. Well, anyway, I'm your teacher now [laughs]. Good luck to you.

So, finished. Good. Very good. So this Shambhala dharma, and this Shambhala teaching, is as I said, it's hard and soft at the same time. Don't be upset if it seems so hard. And don't be too euphoric if it seems so good. Have a clean sense of your mind, and body, and your speech. Clean in the sense that basically all of us, from the very beginning, have had no particular problem. We're born in this life by whatever coincidence it is, and had the parents that we had. Maybe sometimes they were good to us, maybe not so good to us. Maybe we had situations in life that we don't want to look back on, and say, "Well, that wasn't conducive to a real, you know, wonderful childhood," or all the rest of it. Maybe our situation now is not so great, in our job, in our relationship, but still, still, ladies and gentlemen, we are here right now, and we are able to discuss things of a genuine nature. We are able to work with each other in a genuine way. And this is not just a conventional experience. This is really genuine experience. If you have the opportunity, you should pursue it. After all, we could be anything we want to be. We have seen in the world that people do that all the time. They put on certain clothing and they say certain words and they become certain things. And, you know, for a time, they are stars in ascendance, and people say,

“Aren’t they great?” And then after a while, people don’t even remember who they are. In this Shambhala teaching, to be a warrior means that you don’t need notoriety particularly. You don’t even need fame. Or you don’t need any kind of particular spotlight on yourself. You just need to be gentle and good and confident so that the whole world can be illuminated. For the time that we are alive, we should make the best of it from that point of view: to make the world bright and distinct, so that for our lives and the lives of people to come, there is a real sense of basic goodness, of basic warriorship in the world. We have the time to do it. We should do it while it is possible. And in this place of Chicago, it seems to me, one of the most fertile places for behaving like a warrior. [Laughter] It’s a good place. I always liked this place. It’s happy and sad at the same time. So it has been my great pleasure to be able to talk to you about these things. And I hope that you will follow these teachings, which are presented here by Shambhala Training in Chicago regularly. So, give it your best shot. And don’t be disappointed if it doesn’t feel like what you think it should feel like. [Laughs; laughter] You learn a little bit more as you go along, okay? So that’s what real confidence is: learn a little bit more as you go along. Thank you.

HOST/ESS: On behalf of the Chicago [inaudible words: warriors and would-be future warriors?], please accept our appreciation of the teachings, and please come back soon.

VR: How could I resist not coming back to Chicago? I actually love this place. I have a great feeling for this place. And although I have not been here a long time, perhaps if you all get together and practice this Shambhala teaching, I could come back here and teach more, which I would like to do. But you have to create the atmosphere. That’s really important, to create the atmosphere. The best way to do that is to practice together, then actually *live* together. Again, my very best wishes to you and to your families and friends. Make sure that you don’t take yourselves too seriously. [Laughter]

[END OF RECORDING]