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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE ETHICS OF CHANNELING

As in any other endeavor wherein you deal with other people, there needs to be a code of right conduct in channeling that exists for the protection of the feelings of the people with whom you are dealing and of yourself. Although vast amounts of money seldom change hands, people's feelings are often deeply involved in transactions with a channel, and just as others treat you, the instrument, with a good deal of respect, so you respect them and your position.

Money will come to you in the course of your channeling, whether you ask for it or not, if your work has a stable basis of preparation and dedication, and especially if you have made any of your information public. In the Holy Bible, love of money is considered quite nefarious; about money itself, that particular holy work seems to conclude little, except that one should have a sense of stewardship towards the money one does make. It is not unethical, in my opinion, to charge money for serving as an instrument. Many excellent channels do charge and since they spend their working lives acting as instruments at the behest of others it seems only logical that these instruments should be able to make a living. However, anything can be carried too far. The price charged for, say, an hour's session with an instrument varies widely, and it is difficult to say when "enough" has become "too much." Perhaps the most commonsense way to look at charging money for channeling is that if you need to do so in order to channel, and if you feel that you are doing work worthy of accepting payment, you should certainly go ahead and charge. I would advise you to keep your price in line with your experience and effort, and with your actual daily needs. No amount of emolument can pay enough for your dedication, nor should you hope for such. Some channels, for instance, lose a great deal of personal time, not just during channeling sessions but in their aftermath, being frail physically and unable to withstand the rigors of serving in this way particularly well. If you are new, young, inexperienced and healthy, be conservative in the price you charge. As you gain experience, charge more. Remember that like any other professional you are "taking work home" in that when you accept the responsibility of being a channel you are accepting what I would call, with my Christian background, a lay ministry, a ministry by one of the flock, not the shepherd; a ministry by a member of the congregation and not the priest. As a kind of deacon, without dogma or doctrine, but totally dedicated to the service of the Creator as you have

come to know Him, and to humankind, you have the responsibility of attempting at all times to place your life in the service of those ideals you have decided are yours. If you are charging money—and even if you are not—be sure you are offering a good value, the best value you can make, of the way you live your life. It is not only what is going on in your head that will ultimately aid others. The life that you live will speak far more loudly to people than any fine thought you might be able to opine or channel.

There is another alternative to charging money: accepting contributions. Because I have been extremely fortunate financially, I have never had to charge for serving as an instrument. Many women can with gratitude say the same thing. I have not ever had an overabundance of this world's goods, but have always had “enough,” for myself, if not for this work, and so when I looked for a way to allow people to support my work I found the non-profit corporation, a private or public charity, a desirable option. It is not as easy as it used to be to acquire a 501(c)(3) ruling from the Internal Revenue Service, but it is possible. The corporation, then, is able to pay for printing costs, costs of mailing and other costs which one who attempts to make channeling information available to others must incur.

There are metaphysical points to be made here in favor of not charging. There is a kind of law concerning giving which suggests that charging a certain amount of money for service limits the amount which people can feel free to donate. There is also a money law which has more to do with keeping the green-ray energy center open than with good financial thought: it is impossible for some people to pay for materials which you have channeled; often prisoners cannot pay; many older readers cannot show their appreciation monetarily; youngsters still in school may have an impossibly tight money situation if they are not working. On the other hand, several excellent channels have advised me that I am naive to think that many will listen carefully to me unless I charge enough to get their respect and attention. The argument posits that a student's potential for learning and transformation rises in direct proportion to the size of the fee for your teaching and the sacrifice involved in saving it. It also assumes that what is offered to the student is worth its price. These are considerations, and I hope you will think them through carefully before you decide what to do about charging money.

When it comes to large projects, such as workshops and speaking engagements out of town, money considerations change a bit due to the amount of money which you would be owing if you did not charge something. Again, it is not unethical to charge a fee or a fee plus expenses

for speaking or offering a seminar. If you decide to charge a fee, try to make sure it is in the normal range for the time and the services provided. You might also consider whether or not some special people—the elderly, the very poor, the young—might be exempt from normal charges. My policy is this: I'll go anywhere to speak if invited, provided that those who invite me pay my expenses. This puts me in a position where I have not lost anything by teaching. There is more than a bit of selfishness there, but I do live on a budget, like most people, and could not offer to go places where my expenses not covered. However, once I am there, any additional monies collected by whatever group I address are accepted as a contribution, welcome but not expected. What you will find as you continue channeling is that people are very grateful for this kind of work and want to help you. You do not have to be on the lookout for ways to make money. Your main difficulty will be in keeping things in perspective so that you do not find yourself overwhelmed by temptation when someone is willing to pay you a good deal of money in order to hear certain kinds of information which you do not wish to try to channel.

One last word about money: if you are charging money, the acceptance of that fee creates a bond of a contractual nature between you and the person whom you have served. Be careful, therefore, whom you serve. In this crazy day where more money is made in lawsuits, so it seems, than in honest labor, it is well to choose with some care those to whom you will be obligated. This is another reason I personally prefer accepting contributions to charging a set fee.

There is an old gypsy ethic that suggests that fortune tellers never divulge bad news, especially news of someone's upcoming death. It doesn't matter how clear it is in the hand, or how plain the tea leaves are to read, it is just not done. I have heard of very inventive ways of getting around this. For instance there is the case of my friend, Denny, who went to a psychic. She acted disturbed, and among other things, told him never to accept a ride in a red car. Quite a while later Denny was hitchhiking. He was picked up by a red VW beetle, which crashed horrendously. Denny almost didn't make it back to this earth plane, and when he did he was to have a long, slow pull back to health, as he had suffered brain damage. He is fine now, but will never be as he was before. It is too bad that he did not remember to avoid maroon automobiles, but on the other hand, news of this death would have disturbed him perhaps more in mind than in its actual near-occurrence. In the same situation, try just as hard to find ways of channeling which circumnavigate prophesy.

If you are naturally gifted as a psychic as well as functioning as a channel you may have no choice about what you perceive. You may get a flood of information that you don't necessarily want to have. Nevertheless, because you are gifted and are receiving it, you are also responsible for using it correctly. Try in what you say to inspire people, not just with your channeling but in those things which you share person to person. Try for the "beware of red cars" technique rather than either a bald statement like "You are going to die," or refraining from saying anything at all. Use both common sense and whatever faculty of intuition and prayer may be yours. Common sense is the more sturdy of the two faculties for this kind of discrimination; however, some calls are too close to make using logic alone.

Channels who have had success over a period of time doing good work can often run into ethical difficulty by allowing people to become dependent on them. Try not to do this with your own practice. Remember that you are here to serve others. They did not show up in order to serve you. Regardless of who does what to whom, your attitude should remain one of open-hearted and compassionate service. Thus you need continuously to make distinction between what you say as yourself and what your contact says through you as a channel. If you have tuned carefully and challenged all entities who come before your notice, the contact which you ultimately obtain will be of positive polarity and will not attempt to make people dependent on it.

If your contact is channeling things through you which are making people dependent on it and you, you need to rethink your channeling. Ask yourself if you have a really sound and stable dedication to serving through the practice of channeling. Ask yourself what the shape of that commitment is and how you can improve your challenging and tuning processes to prepare yourself to receive a higher and better contact. If you have spotted channeling that seems to be going in the direction of making people come back and back in order to get something they feel they need, do not put this matter from your mind until you have assured yourself that nothing you are doing is in any way tying this person to you or to the contact. Some people are naturally dependent, and there is nothing you should do about that. However, if you are not channeling specific information but rather offering metaphysical and philosophical inspiration, you should consider yourself to be on the right track regardless of the number of hangers-on you may have accumulated over the years, remembering always that most of your students and readers will come back for years, perhaps, with the best and most inner-directed motives. There's a big difference between those inquiring spirits

who make up a channel's audience and the occasional clinging vines who don't like to think, especially for themselves.

There is no one sure merciful way to discourage naturally dependent seekers from attaching themselves to you. As long as you avoid being self-serving and channeling specific prophecy you will not offer the kind of naturally tempting environment which will keep hangers-on hanging on! Examine your behavior to be sure that you are not encouraging this sort of channeling in order to feed your ego. People will seek at their own speed and along their own path of inquiry. The answers important to them will be awakened from within them, not from outside of them, through a process of recognition of truth that is impossible to describe but which almost everyone has experienced. You are not responsible to anyone except insofar as you are living as well as you can in accordance with what you believe and are channeling in a responsible and dedicated fashion.

Once you have been serving in this capacity for a while you will start to discover your time disappearing, if indeed you had any left over in the first place. People begin calling you up from around areas in which you have spoken, wanting to know more about your work. If you have a published a book, readership eventually becomes a matter of national circulation, then international circulation, and one day you are dealing with people who have never read English. Everyone wants you to write to them or speak to their organization and yet there is just so much you can do in any day's time. What are your ethical responsibilities? Do you need to make yourself available to the public?

It is my opinion that you do. You do not have to carry it too far, or give over your life, your home and your work to the business of being with people. If you do that, you will find that you have also stopped being an instrument. You need to allow yourself solitude for meditation, contemplation, reading, goofing off and having a ball. These are all highly constructive activities which make the instrument far more able to focus and concentrate during the next work period. However, it is important to make yourself available to people. So how is it done?

One of the easiest and best ways I know to share yourself with people is to put aside a certain day each week, or each fortnight or month if such be your scheduling needs, for the public. Our group, for instance, has had a Sunday night meditation almost every week since January, 1962, with the meetings being at my house since 1974. With this time already set aside it is far more possible to handle requests from people who want to come see you.

You simply tell them the day and time of your weekly open-house and invite them to it. Although this is a time-consuming way of handling your obligations, it is also a time-saving method insofar as you have accumulated all of your debts to those whom you serve into one time-period per week. To the extent that you feel responsible for making extra dates with out-of-towners and strangers at times other than that one day, this plan will be a failure. If you are setting aside a specific time for this responsibility to be discharged, you owe it to yourself and your work to try to keep your time with the public limited to that day and time.

People are wonderful and I could probably spend all my time just talking and being with folks. However, my Puritan background must still hold a great deal of sway with me because I persist having the illusion that there is something more for me to do than chat, however charming or meaningful the conversation. If you are tremendously enjoying meeting lots of different people, go ahead and do it. It is likely that the experience itself will sate you and once you have gotten your fill of people you will be far more able to temper your enthusiasm with a little respect for your other needs. You really do owe all the people whom you are serving a chance to ask anything that they want to ask, to share anything that they want to share. You are not, however, responsible for doing that at their convenience but rather for making the effort at all. People who say "I will only be in town for one day and I must see you," no longer tug at my heartstrings as they once did, because I have sat through far too many conversations where the people talked to me for hours at a time very inconvenient to me. It seems that at least half of the people who "absolutely must see you" at an awkward time are people who want to change you or to use you as a sounding board for something outside your field of inquiry, and while I do not mind listening to criticism or being sympathetic if I have the time, I don't think any instrument has the responsibility of taking the time away from his or her own private life to do this.

If you have published any of your channeling, and many instruments have, you will begin getting letters from people, some good, some bizarre, some merely sad. This correspondence represents an ethical commitment which I would encourage you to undertake, to the balancing of any energy that wants to blend with yours. A letter is a far more grateful medium for sharing opinion than a personal visit because the etiquette of face-to-face discussions is such that you may well find yourself too embarrassed or polite to offer the appropriate opinion and thus blunt your words because of courtesy. In a letter both praise and blame can be tempered with compassion in a far more

careful and thoughtful way than is available to someone face to face with another, since a letter can be written and rewritten and sent out only after you are completely satisfied with the degree of compassion that it shows. When you are talking you only have one chance per thought. People who send you letters are sending you energy just as much as people who come to visit you. To discharge your responsibilities to them it is well to blend your energy with theirs in as compassionate and loving a way as is possible. It is not always possible to get very close to people. More than once in my life I have been very sad to notice the great gap that exists between the close friendship that can be achieved in letters and the uneasy comradeship that can ensue in person if two people are communicating in two widely various ways with each other. I have wished, in fact, that we communicated through the equivalent of a letter at all times! We do so much better. So answer every letter if you can. We do.

After trying to devise a telephone ethic for several years, I personally elected to take an unpublished number and filter all calls through our telephone answering device. People who hate answering machines virtually never contact me by telephone. This is my response to telephone tyranny. If you have a listed number, be prepared for frequent incursions on your time at all hours by strangers. You're on your own on this subject, as I dislike telephones to the exclusion of a rational ethic!

A discussion of the ethics of channeling wouldn't be complete without talking about confidentiality. I'm talking to two different kinds of channels here, and so I will need to ask you a question. Are you a priest or a lay person? Quite a few channels are actually priests, having incorporated as a church or monastery, and having set up a way of ordaining ministers in that church. The rule of confidentiality of the priesthood is absolute. A priest does not have to go to jail for refusing to divulge to a court the confessions of a criminal. That professional ethic extends to psychiatrists, who have the equivalent of a priesthood conferred on them by the scientific community and public opinion in general. You, however, are probably not legally a priest and, as a lay minister, are as responsible to the forces of justice as you are the confidentiality of the confessional. I believe you can play it either way. However, it would be well to think this one through before the situation comes up. If you agree to hear the confidences of a person who, it turns out, has done or seen something relevant to a crime, you will have to make a response to that situation, either by calling on the ethics of confidentiality or by telling the officer of the court to which you are responsible what you know. This is a decision you will have to make for

yourself. It is a gray area, in my opinion. I lean towards absolute confidentiality; however, I know that that opinion could put me in jail one day. It is simply my experience that in this illusion the forces of loyalty have a deeper metaphysical meaning than the forces of mundane justice. And, of course, each case needs to be judged, to a certain extent, on its own merits.

Back to money and taxation! It is a great temptation, if you are not already putting contributions in a special non-profit account which you cannot personally touch, to pocket whatever cash may be given to you as a contribution without making any kind of record of the income. I am not fond of the IRS. I may be crazy, but I am not that crazy! However, it is an unfortunate fact that the way one lives one's life is always relevant to the work one does as a channel. Therefore, as an instrument you would do well to be painfully and expensively honest. Keep careful books and pay what you owe. Hopefully that will not be a death knell to your service. However, it would, in my opinion, be better to stop taking money for your work than to pocket it as undeclared income.

You are going to be asked an enormous number of questions if you continue channeling and teaching channeling for any length of time. Some of the questions will be repeated over and over again, but there are always questions that surprise you, questions that you would be delighted to answer if you only could. There is often the temptation, when asked a challenging question, to move into generalities which will sound pretty good, even though you don't know precisely what you are talking about. This is not an ethical practice. Try to tell the truth at all times. When necessary, say "I don't know." The more you respect the work you are doing, the more clearly you will see that it is not well to speak beyond your experience. People do not think you are ignorant simply because you don't know the answer to a question. They appreciate that kind of honesty.

People will ask you what you think about other channels and other groups. Study your responses carefully, to be sure that they are free from judgment. There isn't anything wrong with giving as honest an opinion as you can about someone else's work as long as you remember that each person's work has an unique audience and an unique message which may be far different than your own orientation. If you can remember that variety is not an indication that someone is wrong, your conversation will be well served. Certainly to condemn another group out of hand is unethical. To condemn any channel or group is not advisable. In the first place you could be wrong. In the second place, it is a wrong use of your power. People need to discern for themselves, to choose and discriminate out of their own experience and

thought. Spreading your opinions far and wide on other channels, especially if your opinion is negative, is a way to make yourself feel good at the expense of others, which is unethical enough. Add to that the fact that you are tying the questioner to you by your judgmental information, making that person dependent upon you to know what is right for him or her, and you have a thoroughly unethical practice. Please try to avoid it. You'll find it difficult at first. When you have been upset by material someone has produced, it is difficult to avoid condemnation. After some practice you will find the words coming a bit more adroitly, and eventually you will be able to say something honest about other workers in this field without judging.

I have never seen anyone write, in this new age, on the ethics of training new channels. Perhaps it is not yet a common enough practice for there to be a felt need. However, I am making the assumption that a significant number of channels will end up teaching channeling. Apprenticeship is, after all, the oldest form of teaching. As a teacher of new channels, I will share with you some of my feelings, for whatever use they may be to you. You can guess from what has gone before that I do not charge money for this, as I myself was taught freely, and my teacher before me. I also consider the work spiritual in nature and very exacting, and my teaching of it as part of a sacred ministry, sacred to me and sacred to my Creator. I am not, however, saying it is unethical to charge money for teaching; if your financial circumstances do not allow you to live comfortably without charging something, by all means do so. Just be sure it is a reasonable amount. The ethics of some groups which charge a very large amount to teach what they have to share are to my mind questionable. There is always the argument that people will not use what they have learned unless they pay for it. In the American materialistic culture this is sometimes the case. The theory further goes that if you pay a great deal for something you will pay a great deal of attention to that something. This may also be the case, but if you are doing that, try to make your contribution very, very special. I do not have an avoidance towards money, but only towards greed.

There are two main categories of students: curious and committed. The curious will almost surely not continue channeling after having learned the technique. That's fine. There is nothing unethical about sharing the experience of channeling with someone else who is not dedicated to performing it as a service. You are performing a service to that person in giving the person information. It is well if you are convinced that the person's curiosity is a legitimate one, and not prurient or excessively shallow. That person may have another area towards which he is moving

and in which he can be of far more service than he could be by channeling. There are many, many ways to be of service and vocal channeling is only one. Therefore, I do not turn down the curious merely because they do not have an ultimate commitment to using their ability to channel in the service of vocal channeling. As long as there is a fundamental commitment to the spiritual path and a dedication to the service of others the necessary ingredients are present for teaching to begin.

Those whose curiosity is blank and devoid of any metaphysical basis are a category of student it has not proven worthwhile to me in the past to teach. The experience remains empty since the seeker has no previous experience of seeking and finding to form a basis for this experience of learning to channel. And so without any ethical or moral load on it, the experience vanishes like smoke, as do all neutral experiences. That category of student I do not feel inclined to teach, and it will improve your temper to use similar discrimination.

The committed student, of course, is a joy and a delight, and I hope that you get many of them during the time that you serve in this fashion. To these students you have the responsibility of remaining a teacher to them for as long as you both shall live, as this is not a relationship which ends except by death. You may not have heard from a student for many years but if you have taught a person, when he or she writes or calls and needs to pick your brains or your heart on some matter related to your teaching it is unethical to avoid that responsibility.

You will notice that I have not anywhere in this book said a word about the mechanics of channeling. It is not difficult to explain or to teach this technique, but I hope that as teachers you will keep the technique to yourself except within the confines of private instruction with selected students. It's the great numbers of people who are channeling these days, taught in a most unethical manner, and set free upon the world with no one to call if they get into trouble, that prompted me to write this volume. There is a reason for the word occult; it means hidden, and some things are just better hidden. The keys to the invisible world are hidden because they are invisible, and should remain so because that's part of the nature of inner work. To take this kind of key and put it before a world which is an unpolarized amalgamation of positive and negative souls is to cast pearls before swine. Better teachers than I have been against that! This chapter will probably be longer if the book is printed again, because I expect a lot of questions from readers on the ethics of channeling simply because the field is relatively new and for the most part completely ungoverned. We dwell in

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the lacuna between the seen and the unseen worlds, and laws are either civil, to deal with seen things, or religious. Since we do not accept doctrine or dogma in the same way that a church does, no body of religious persons can control us. Since it is not against the law to speak or to print and distribute one's writings, the civil courts have no real way to control our activities. We must control them ourselves. I hope you will think ethically and behave ethically for it will affect not only the personal ease with which you are able to live your life, but will also shine through in your channeling work.