Okay, so then I'll start. So in kind of giving the first talk kind of approaching issue of concentration, I thought of giving an overview of the traditional classic kind of Theravada notion of the path. Buddhism, as an ism isn't really an ism. Traditionally in Buddhists in India, Buddhism was known as offering a path it's a, it's a, it's a path and Marga and people engage not in an ism in terms of belief or creed, but they engage in an activity in a path of practice a path of personal cultivation, development, for the purposes of awakening for the purposes purposes of being of service in the world around them. And the understanding is that the human mind human heart is quite malleable, workable, changeable. It can be conditioned and developed. And that if you don't take some initiative in developing your heart developing your mind, then the mind being such a malleable phenomena will be shaped by the other by the conditions in society around it, the input impacts it. And if you don't take some responsibility of how the shape of your mind heart develops, then you're going to be it's gonna be kind of, you know, skeptical to the currents of popular society, conditioning of our media or advertisement, industry, currency fashions and societal prejudices and biases and whatever they might go on around there. And so it's necessary to take some some to understand how our capacity and responsibility for developing our inner life or psychic life so Buddhism we call the path path of development What I want to do this evening is in talk is to talk about four different notions of the path that could be seen as occurring in Buddhism. There's many different kinds of Buddhism, different ways of emphasizing Buddhism and Buddhist teachings and the path. And I want to mention four different kinds. And the first three we'll call versus a path of cultivation, the path of development of training yourself. And the second is the path of letting go. And the third is the path of no path. And the fourth, I'll tell you later. So most classically and the teachings of the Buddha as they're preserved in the suit does. He talked a lot about the path of development, the path of cultivation. And he, he divided the training, the trainings in the path of training, retraining ourselves, and he called he had many different ways of describing the path of development depending on how you looked at it, what mental factors were involved. One of
the most simple ways of describing the path is by the so called threefold training. It involves a training in ethics and integrity, training in concentration or stilling the mind clarifying the mind the heart. And then the last training is that in wisdom or insight or understanding, penetrating insight that really kind of sees into the nature of our psyche experience of the world. And all these three areas and places we can develop ourselves, we can develop our integrity. And people who are lack integrity A lot can do the most with even people who are pretty, have a high level of integrity can improve it further. And the idea of improving your integrity is not meant to be a moralistic thing that you're bad necessarily if you don't have the highest pitch of integrity. But rather that it's really useful for you as a foundation for the further trainings, it's sometimes been described that meditation, for example, practice is like the hub of a wheel. And your integrity or your ethics is like the axle that goes through that hub that the axle is crooked, then the wheel is not going to turn true. And your carts going to go off the road. And, and so you need to have a true axle, a straight axle that fits well into that hub. And so ethics sometimes called it's called the axle

and isn't it. So, in order to for example, develop a mind is really still part of the part of the second training, training and concentration and Samadhi is a training and having a stillness of mind is subtleness of mind and that stillness of mind Very hard to do if your mind is agitated about something, or if you feel discontent. And the training and integrity is a training and learning how to be content, how to find this kind of deep inner contentment, and also how not to do the kind of things fills you with remorse and regret and worry and fear and concern that you might get caught, whatever. So I find it really beautiful. We have a telephone, and it's ringing. We've been found

nice. Waiting for months for someone to call us and call us when we're all here to enjoy it.

was the first phone call.

So so I find it really I find it really beautiful, the mind of integrity, the heart of integrity, that has that kind of purity of mind, purity of heart. And but kind of purity is not considered to be the highest purity. And so the train the trainings are threefold training is a training to go to more and more refined or more deeper, more thorough kinds of purification of the heart and mind. And in my own experience of greatest beauty that I believe this is a faith statement, the greatest beauty that exists for human beings. There's nothing that you can see externally, but is the beauty of a mind and heart which is purified. I don't know maybe this is a strange story to tell but

When I was meant to Asia the second second time I did to Asia to practice I went with very little money and I had enough money for some airfares, but I think I had something like $300 left over after the airfares and I had gone to Thailand Burma, India, kind of for the duration, just read be there as long as it took whatever that meant. And so I was going to open ended with $300. And, and I was in Nepal, Kathmandu going, getting ready to start a month long. Be passionate retreat there. And I made a

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I had a very short night last night and very cool day today. So this is already one so I was in Kathmandu and, and I was walking around waiting for this retreat to start. And the, and had this beautiful kind of art shops, Buddhist art in Kathmandu and, and these beauty I went by the window of one and doing mindful shopping. And I saw the this beautiful Buddhist statue. And I really was very powerfully attracted to the statue of infinity to it. I felt it moved me in some deep way. And it was $100 I had only $300 but I thought this was really you know, a good one to have. So I thought, well, I'll spend a day or two thinking about buying it because I was a big investment given how much money I had. And so I was walking around Kathmandu and thinking about this what to do, and I finally decided that I wouldn't buy it because much more beautiful than the statue was up here. purified mind. And I thought, well, I'll save that money and use it to help someone else so they could practice so they can have a taste to a purified mind. So then the next day I called my girlfriend Berkeley because there was this vague idea that she was going to come and join me in Asia. And I got a roommate and he said, Oh, she left for Sheila's two days ago to find you. It's you know, I have no idea where in Kathmandu to look for me you know, so you know, it's it's nothing to do even back then it was kind of a dig place. You know, how do you find someone in Kathmandu? So I jumped on my bicycle, dash out to the airport and put a little note on the bulletin board. You know their name on it. And she wasn't very mindful person but she was attentive person to the world around her but she had told the person next to her in the airplane, her name just before getting off the plane. And like two, three hours away after I put that note up, that person saw this Find with her name, oh, this is for you. So she found me, and she came with less money than I had. So that hundred dollars then was used for her so that she could practice. So that was you know, so that anyway, the purity of a, you know, one of the greatest beauties in life that I know of as a purified mind, purified heart. So to cultivate that through the practices of integrity, work on our inner integrity, inner integrity, and then there's a practice of Samadhi, the training in Samadhi, or concentration, which will be kind of the subject of this class. And Samadhi means Usually, it's defined as kind of a one pointed focus of the mind, but it means much broader than that. It's a training of the mind in stillness and composure. The Body, Mind the heart. So the mind is not agitated or restless, and it can really be stilled, be at peace in some deep way. There's a lot of different ways in which concentration or Samadhi is developed. There's a lot of different practices for somebody. And there's a lot of different mental factors that come into play in cultivating Samadhi. It's not just simply developing a strong focus, a strong one pointedness of mind. But there's development of our faith capacity of faith, capacity of endeavoring of applying efforts are engaged, engaging ourselves to meet the kind of psychic quality of engagement or energy. There's mindfulness which gets developed which supports concentration. There's wisdom and insight, understanding and supports it. There is joy, cultivation of joy or capacity to feel joy and delight, the cultivation of happiness, the cultivation of equanimity, the cultivation of tranquility, there's a lot of different things that get cultivated, that make it possible to the mind to enter into Samadhi. And it's pretty you know, well known that you can change your mind you can call Debate your mind a lot a lot of professions, a lot of activities that humans do involve some kind of training, developing a skill set developing abilities that we have, you know, if you
develop your musical ability, some of us have less musical ability in others, but to some degree it can be it can be cultivated. And some years ago, my wife was learning classical guitar and I kind of followed her along a little bit in her wake, because it just was easy to kind of follow on her tail wind kind of, so, I was kind of plucking away here and there and I got as far as green sleeves you know, and I got really good at Green sleeves. And as far as I got, but, you know, it took a while to learn to do that, you know, it was an ability I could develop and

and

people develop you know, people have certain professions for example, develop. Some people are some people I know who are computer programmers say the developer has a lot of strong concentration that work or they have that strong concentration to do it, or whatever but to to find that kind of focus to work. So the mind can be developed, the body can be developed, and athletes know that, for example, and athletes, good athletes knows more than just developing their body. It's also developing the mind in some way or other. So the mind is malleable, it's trainable, it can be changed, it can be cultivated. And it's one of the great beauties and wonderful things about the human being is engaging their inner life and sometimes a playful way, a serious way and engaged way Lightwave all kinds of ways in which to engage in it. But I think it's really a beautiful thing and a delightful thing to be involved in the inner cultivation of the factors of Samadhi. Samadhi is if integrity is the foundation for stilling the mind in Samadhi. stilling of the mind is the foundation for seeing Clearly, when your mind is still it's developing a clarity of mind, that then allows us to see clearly and also more than just see clearly, but also allows us to, to, for the mind, the intelligence of the mind to work as clearly as possible or as effectively as possible. Because the path the traditional path of Buddhism of cultivating the path developing a skill sets involves using as much intelligence as we have available to us. It isn't that you have to be an intelligent person. But everyone has some innate intelligence in whatever you have is important to use it in engaging in a path and not just kind of be complacent and feel just a matter of becoming calm, concentrated, but it's also a matter of being very kind of using your your smarts, your intelligence, your abilities, reflecting to think in very clear ways and The mind which gets deep into concentration has a capacity of thinking, or seeing or discovery that's very different than the mind, in street consciousness, where the mind is very busy and agitated and fragmented and thinking of many different things that once So, for example, it's fairly common for people when they get somewhat concentrated in meditation, especially on retreat, to suddenly discover amazing capacity for creativity. And, you know, people suddenly discover they have within them the great American novel. And they are great poem or, for me, it was a three month retreat that I did. I invented the, the next generation of helicopters. And, you know, I don't know nothing about aerodynamics or engineering at all, about the creativity of the mind, just kind of, you know, brilliant, fantastic idea. Have you helicopters and then I my mind because it was concentrated locked onto the side creative idea. And I had a business plan and it was quite involved the where it all went. So the creativity arises sometimes and many of you probably had that experience. Sometimes the mind which is quite still in Samadhi has the ability not to think so much if this is exactly the right way of talking but linearly, but more laterally, it kind of sees broadly sees the patterns, the causal patterns of how our mind and hearts work. So the
Buddha and then it was enlightenment it said, saw the pattern of dependent origination that twelvefold chain of dependent origination, to see the patterns of things as a different kind of functioning of the mind that's available in the mind is quite still, it's like almost an innate capacity of the mind. We start seeing and thinking that'll get them understand Then in new ways, that training then an insight is many different forms of insight leads to the pinnacle of insight, the pinnacle of the kind of joining together of insight and concentration, which is, brings us to a point of great equanimity. And equanimity, when the mind is as equanimous as possible, that becomes the jumping board, kind of the diving board, where you stand on the edge of that kind of board of equanimity. And at some point, you step off or the board kind of falls away from under you and the body mind drop away or the unconditioned opens up to our experience that which is beyond the world of conditions, including those conditions that we're working with. As we develop the path. The path is about developing those conditions to bring us to the point of equanimity so we can discover that which is unconditioned. So that's a really beautiful thing to do. It's a fantastic and wonderful thing to do. And many people have spent wonderful periods of their life cultivating and developing these spiritual qualities that come with developing the three tradings integrity, concentration and insight. And some people have made themselves miserable doing this. Because it lends itself to measuring how far you've gotten, and comparing you know, how far you develop yourself compared to your neighbor, how far she's developed yourself. And when I was in Burma, which is where they really focused a lot on this idea of cultivating yourself and following a path that gets you deeper and deeper and deeper. It was, it was really dramatic houses, people would, some people would kind of look at each other and see how far she's gotten. And there was this one woman, American woman who had certainly attained certain level of realization in that tradition. When we, when we were there, and there was this American guy who was the residence where I was, and he heard that this woman had attained a certain level of enlightenment. And he got really bitter into Oh, I know, I've known her for years. There's no way she could have done that.

And, and many of us, you know, suffer from lack of self worth anyway and feeling so inadequate, and, and the idea of having to cultivate yourself and you know, which prize implies success and progress and it's just such a burden. You know, and it's just given me a break and, and so we'd prefer, you know, aren't there other paths in Buddhism, you know, for people like me. So there are so the second path that I wanted to mention, there's a path of letting go. And letting the path of letting go doesn't involve does not For the cultivation of anything, it involves just letting go. And so you let go of the obstacles for being deeply apiece deeply equanimous you let go this obstacles that can bring you to the unconditioned. And there's a famous quote by Ajahn Chah, where he said, If you let go a little, you'll have a little peace. If you let go a lot, you'll have a lot of peace. And if you let go completely, you'll have complete peace. And sort of letting go to disinvest ourselves with the things that we obsessed with, with when we hold on to our attachments. So we are attached For example, to our thoughts. And so understanding how our thoughts work and the nature of our thoughts, learning how to see them clearly. So we can let go of our obsession with them is really important. step towards becoming peaceful. We let go of our feelings, our emotions, rather than having a manifesto of what my
anger or with my happiness means and what I have done. Why have to have it or not have it whatever, we just let go of all these ideas. But what we need, we don't need, just let go, let go. And the path of letting go means every chance you get to just let go. Because all the things that keep us from being deeply happy and at peace, are activities of the mind is something we're doing. When we have a thought or an idea, we we organize our life or we judge our life around an idea, there's an activity of mind to hold that idea to make the idea to engage ourselves in that idea when So, letting go allow us to get rid of all the activities, which gets in the way to the innate peace and the innate kind of unconditioned movement of the heart and the mind. So, a lot of teachers focus just let go, just let go let go against the meadow loves, at least for a while was that was his main teaching just let go, let go let go. The third path is the path of no path. And this is a very powerful path. For a number of reasons. One of the reasons is that the view of life view of ourselves in the note path path is, is the view of what the world and human beings look like through the eyes of someone who's awakened. When you have tasted or seen the world through kind of awakened or fried eyes, there's a sense of, there's no need to have a path or there is no path, a sense of the innate perfection of yourself of how things are how the world is, that principle of the conservation of perfection. To understand the it's to understand our reality ourselves without the usual kind of discrimination that the mind makes, that causes a lot of suffering. So for example, many of you know that discriminations like certain kinds of disease, combinations like tall and short. You say something is tall and something is short, the tallness and shortness of something is not inherent in the things you're talking about, but rather exists in comparing the object with something else. So, compared to some people, I'm tall, compared to other people, I'm short. And it's not like magic. It's not like I'm changing myself, myself without changing who I compare myself to. Who I am innately has nothing to do with those comparisons. A lot of the suffering we have around the sense of self is because the sense of self we hold is a comparative sense of self. We compare ourselves to others, we compare ourselves to ideals. We compare ourselves to who we've been the past or who we think we're going to be in the future. And we discriminate between all these different comparisons. Also, just Good and bad is often the same nature. judgments of good and bad oftentimes belong to this world of comparative thought. And it's not inherent in the activity or in the person itself, but belong sometimes to culturally conditioned ideas of what's good and bad.

So the path of no path is to see through the minds capacity to comparative thought to discriminate, thinking the kind of discriminating thinking gets in the way and to see the innate perfection, simplicity, the innate ease, which is possible here. When we're not engaged in even the comparative idea, or there's progress to be made. There's a goal to be attained. There's all these mental factors to be cultivated and developed. All that just can be considered extra from the path of no path. And the idea is not to try to do anything, but just to abide to live to, to let go into that. It's all right. Here, this is it. This is the perfection of life, that pure land, the paradise of life is to be found right here, if we can see through the eyes of awakening of a Buddha. So it's very compelling. Some people love this path. And some people have an innate kind of ability to have an affinity to it, the path of no path. And some people is completely absurd. You know, what does this mean? You know, and how does this work and they have no sense of it at all. These three paths or paths that I've talked about so far of cultivation of letting go, and no path can be seen as No, they don't have to be seen as being separate from each
other. So sometimes Buddhist schools will oppose each other because one school will choose one over the other, and then say we have it right and they have it wrong. But they can also be seen as being different phases in a person's life, practice life, that sometimes one phase is more important than the other and isn't necessarily linear from cultivation to the didn't go to kind of no path for some people it goes upside down, they start with the no path and then they discover how great it is to let go and then they discover how great it isn't fun it is and appropriately is for to cultivate oneself, just like you would cultivate a garden. But in order to in order to let go, you need to have oftentimes certain amount of inner strength and the path of cultivation is developing these various forms of inner strength. Some people it's very frightening to let go without having some inner stability first. In order to practice the path of cultivation, it helps if you have some ability to let go, let go of your thoughts. So you can focus on developing your concentration. If you want to understand the path of no path, it helps be able to let go of all the ideas that you know all these comparative ideas, all your ideas of progress and getting somewhere comparing yourself to others and everything. It can be really helpful to do the path of cultivation, from the context of no path. They it's like you don't have to you inherit your inherent sense of self worth is not dependent on how far you make it on the path of cultivation. Because you realize that there's already you're already perfect just the way you are. And you perfection allows the possibility of cultivating yourself, not to make yourself better, but because it's just the nature of what's wonderful nature of the human mind and heart to be engaged in that kind of activity to do those things. So those are the but all three of those paths are really well served by concentration. If you can have a strong focus of mind, then it's a lot easier to practice the path of cultivation. So a lot easier to practice letting go if the mind is still in quiet, unable to see clearly If the mind is stable, it's a lot easier to abide in the path of no path if the if you're not agitated and fragmented and the minds running off in 10,000 directions at once. So from this three different paths so far, you will relate to your experience in different ways. So, for example, in the path of cultivation, if you're in a meditation hall with a lot of noise and a lot of creaking floors and people coming in late a lot, then you wouldn't be disturbed. You wouldn't be you know, upset about that it wouldn't judge that of course, what you would do is you would just focus on developing your concentration and develop a stronger constant concentration of stronger then the tendency to be distracted by those kinds of sounds. So you could more reason to be engaged with throw yourself more fully into the practice.

On the path of letting go you notice that when all this creaking And coming and going going on, you would notice, Oh, you've noticed a tendency of the mind to judge that or to be to be disturbed by that or whatever the mind does in relationship to it. And you notice that you just let go of it. You just let go, let go let go. You wouldn't hold on to that and hang on to it. And the path of no path, you would see each little creek over the floor out there as being the innate perfection of the universe. 5 billion years of evolution. And 12 billion years of cosmic development has merged into that Creek. Isn't that awesome? It's like the most amazing thing. You should be you should be all like looking at night sky. And isn't that awesome to see the stars? It just is awesome to have that little clique because you see the path of no TAs sees the perfection of everything. The final path I want to mention is the path of service. And why I save it, for the end is a path of service can hold any one of the other three paths. And you can be engaged in any of the other three paths with a motivation to be of service to our world
around us to be helpful to feel some empathy for the suffering of the world, and to feel that there's meaning or you feel motivation within you to respond to that suffering. And for some Buddhists, this is the important path that they take. It's really kind of the organizing principle for how they engage in their practice. And so they try to figure out how can they be invested service and some, and that's when they sometimes pick up one of the other earlier three paths as a way of strengthening and developing their capacity to be a greater service. So for example, the person in the path of service would hear the squeaking floorboards Oh, Moving and people coming in late and people kind of, you know, whatever they're doing here.

And they would say, Oh,

I think what might be really helpful is if I really sit still enable an offer my tremendous stability and stillness and acceptance into this room to hold that. And if I can hold that in my stillness, then maybe the people who are moving and whatever, maybe they can feel that and feel inspired by it feel, nourished by it, supported by it, accepted with it, and it's very helpful for them. Because if I am that just as you know, moving around and just as much as then then we rest we resonate, you know, and we kind of like the whole room kind of before you know, we're we just opened dancehall but if you know so it's an offering to so it's an offering that we do and we really go had to be in a meditation hall where as long as noise because our offering has the most good then

Isn't that great?

And so that's my thoughts about it. And then the last thing because I'm trying to make plugs for concentration, so just very simply, you know, if you develop your concentration, then it's easier also to be of service because you stay focused on that task and not be distracted. Concentration is really important. And we'll talk about it more.

And

so,

so that's all I have to say. Right now. We have a couple of minutes if anyone has a comment or question. Yes. No,

you know, I can see how you can see the floor.

Bit. How have you see the asset protection
Well, I think it's not maybe it's not it depends how you it's a little bit. I don't think we want to use the word perfection all the time. But I think it means a kind of radical acceptance that that also is part of life and involves a very radical, I think, for me very deep trust, then that the mind or the heart doesn't have to contract, because there's war. And the trust hopefully means that out of that innate perfection, is your response. If you really understand that place is maybe it's an article of faith, which I believe is true. Best of my experience, is if you really kind of in that place or close to that place of no path really abiding there clearly, that doesn’t inhibit

your innate capacity or innate motivation to respond. To that war to do something about it. So it doesn't mean if if the to see the perfection of everything. If that means that you're not, you're just going to be a log on, you know, you know, just a log who sits there just sees it all doesn't do anything. It says everything's perfect. You know, I think that's doing violence to who we are, who we are as human beings are responders to the world around us. And part of that perfection is the way in which we respond. But that sense of responding feels like it's part of the perfection because like it's part of the so the Trust has to be deep enough that's also okay to respond. And sometimes the way we respond is Oh, I better become, you know, a more loving person let's cultivate loving kindness because they're more useful to go respond to the war sending some sense so it requires it's a very very Radek, I believe very deep, radical form of trust in life itself. Yes. So it seems to me

as if the practices for Temple of any of these paths are the same, you're just on a slightly different focus.

So you might, we might do meditation on the breath and

watch your thoughts, but only you're watching my video.

It's probably yes as possible. I'm not sure I don't I don't want to make a kind of generalized statement or agreement with what you said. But I think just kind of, kind of

generally, yes.

for letting go

Well, I hope and I hope that everything that we ever teach here is our tools that support the possibility of learning to let go. And then what is actually letting go itself? What is the disinvestment, what is the, the movement of the mind that that releases the holding or the clinging? Sometimes if a person doesn't, some people don't have a sense of what that means. And sometimes it's hard to point to what it means and sometimes it's something that people learn as they go along. But for example, if you're
cultivating a concentration, the breathing and a thought arises, that some, you know, a great American novel or say it's, you know, you've thought arises, the freezer needs to be defrosted right now. You know, you, you know, you're sitting there, you're feeling very concentrated and very still and you feel wow, you know, I bet I'm gonna close to full enlightenment. And then this thought arises, you know, the refrigerator needs cleaning now. And then as you know, between the refrigerator and your enlightenment and, and probably you let go of something, you can choose one or the other, right? choosing one of the others let go of one. And unfortunately many people choose to refrigerator. You let go of your enlightenment, you know, you might let go of that thought you see, oh, that's silly, you know. And so you'll get used to it, I'm not going to follow that thought, I'm not gonna engage, you know, believe in that thought or I'm not going to do it. That's saying I'm not going to do it or follow that thought or be involved in it is a kind of letting go.

I heard a talk that he gave once and you compare that movie, as good as it gets. When he walks into that therapy office, and there's all these sad faces, and he says, What if this is as good as it gets?

reminded me of

wherever we are right now.

Good, reminds me of that reminds me of, I've told us a few times here. So I'm sorry for repeating myself. But when I was a young Zen student, and I would sit machines, these intensives and retreats, I had the idea that Zen you're supposed to move. And it's kind of the rhetoric back then. But I didn't realize I didn't know that actually people moving around around me, but I didn't know that because I wasn't paying attention to them. So I was just sitting there and I was intense pain, and so much pain that I would get up from the this sitting 40 minutes of sitting there. 10 minutes of walking meditation before the next sitting in my whole body would shake kind of Converse. And if those 10 minutes better, 10 minutes, I could kind of calm down and be still again, and then I would like to sit. It was a lot of intense pain. And I just sat with it's still I thought that's what you're supposed to do. And when Kinda that pain burned up. So it was kind of forced letting go. Because nothing could survive and that kind of fire all day idealism I had about what Zen was and what a great, you know, Zen master I was going to be it was gonna be like a bit of Zen center and if only people would notice and who knows what I thought but you know, nothing nothing, you know, you know, my idea is to get caught, I'm going to get concentrated, you know, or I'm going to develop great insight or whatever I was thinking I was doing nothing survived the pain just all burned up. And with with a question for me then and it was very purifying Riddick was, was, I would say to myself, what, in the midst of this burning pain, I would say, What if this is forever? And then what was essential about life, what was the central motivation or essential qualities of being alive? What wants you to be human being in that fire, what was left? And for me that was very, very precious. What was left when everything else seemed to be stripped away from me. And I look back very fondly I don't recommend that path to anyone. But it was very important
for me. So what is this is it in the fire, I was lucky because the fire was able to burn everything else away. You know, nothing's nothing, nothing, my self pity, couldn't survive, nothing could survive.

Well, I was that for a cheerleading talk on concentration.

Anyway, I thank you all very much for listening so attentively and I wish you all a wonderful week, and may you all be happy