

## Not Self: Selfing - (2 of 5)

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So starting last week, and then continuing today, and maybe for another few weeks, I had in mind to give a series of talks about this Buddhist concept of self, not self. And it's a very central teaching in Buddhism, and often somewhat confusing, and I wanted to kind of spend a number of evenings talking about it to get at it from different angles, different aspects of it. And in the most simplistic and also inaccurate representation of what the Buddha taught, people will say, Oh, the Buddha taught that there is no self. Have you heard that? And then there's always questions people have. Well, you know, how could there be no self? I'm here and you're there and you. I'm myself and I've paid a lot of money by a therapist to strengthen my sense of self, and now you're telling me that, you know, it's all wasted.

And so the idea is not so—well, we'll get to that in a few weeks about what we actually said about it. But today I'm going to try to avoid the idea of, you know, is there self or is there not a self? Where self is, folks, is talked about as a noun, but rather I talk about selfing, use the word self as a verb, as an activity where we are, various ways in which we are involved in manufacturing a sense of self, constructing a sense of self. An idea of self is a whole complex of ways in which the mind engages in activity of thought, of beliefs, of feelings, of body, and all kinds of things that come together, so that we're constantly kind of recreating. We represent ourselves.

And one of the ways to use mindful meditation is, once you get some modicum of calm, is to turn your attention not to get further calm just to get calm for its own sake, but to become calm enough so you can actually start studying how this constructive process, this activity of selfing arises within us. It's very hard to see in the business of daily life how we do it, because it happens very quickly. But sometimes if you sit quietly enough, you can actually watch or

notice how this works. To give you one example of how meditation helped me one day see what I was doing—it was a little bit retrospective, but still—and that was when we were still over there in Pāli. I was teaching there. I came to a Monday evening to teach, and there was an old friend there who I hadn't seen for many, many years now.

As I walked in, she was there, and it was nice to see her, but just literally as seven thirty I have to go sit down. So I said, we said a few words back and forth, and then I said to my friend, I'm come to hear the talk, and I said, Oh, I didn't prepare to talk this evening, and then I went and sat. Now, why was that important news to tell my friend? I didn't prepare to talk. Why was that the thing my friend hadn't seen for ten years? Why, you know, I had a few exchanges. Why did I say that particular piece of information?

So anyway, so I said that, and then we went and sat down, and as we were sitting there it echoed in my head. What I had just said was the last words I said before sitting, and I realized that what I was doing was I was protecting myself from being judged, because if I gave a lousy talk and my friend was there, you know, I wouldn't look very good. So if I said, Oh, I didn't prepare my talk, then that would lower the expectation of my friend and myself, you know? And I would be protected a little bit. So that's called selfing in Buddhism. I was kind of involved in this activity of playing the self game, the selfing game.

In this case, I was primarily protecting some sense of self that I was protecting myself from someone else playing the selfing game towards me. And that's how it often plays out. Also, we self, we do the selfing game, so other people can kind of participate in this game that we're playing, illusion we're playing. We have a way we want to be seen by others, and so we sometimes will talk certain ways, wear clothes certain ways, will act in certain ways to try to get people to see us that way, because that's kind of how we want to be seen or not be seen or something. So if we look at the issue of self from the point of view of an activity as a verb, then it gets very interesting, and you, then you can easily see, Oh, sometimes you can easily see, Oh, there's selfing going on.

There's activity going on. I don't know if there's a real self or no self or anything, but I can certainly see that I'm doing this constructive game, this play of creating a sense of self. So there are three or primary ways that the Buddha talked about selfing, how that activity of selfing happens. And this is repeatedly in the discourses of the Buddha. He falls back on these three, and sometimes almost seems like it's very repetitive in a sutta. And the repetition I hear is not because this would put a lot of emphasis on looking and seeing how this function. And that is the three selfing activities, the activity where we take something as mine.

When we take something as mine, the second one is taking something as myself, and the third is we take something as my essence, as my soul, as my *atta*—the Buddhist word *atta*, sometimes translated itself as *ātman*, sometimes translated as soul. U Silānanda, who is a great Burmese teacher who died recently because he lived here in Halfmoon Bay, he translated *atta* as soul. And that kind of thing, you solve some of these problems we have when we come as self. So the Buddha said there's a mining—mining is making things into mine. There is a my-selfing, making something into myself. And then there is a souling or essencing, making something into my essential self.

And each of these three corresponds, can correspond with three kinds of clinging or craving. The first is the craving for possession. The second is the craving for a particular one called conceit, and I'll talk more about it in a few minutes. And the third one is the craving towards views, opinions, philosophies. So they all represent some kind of craving and selfing. Often behind it is there's a movement of clinging. We want something to happen, not only want it, but there's a kind of compulsion around, Let me be this kind of person.

Some people, that kind of clinging to be a certain kind of person is to be positive. They want to be somebody. Sometimes it takes the form that they want to be nobody. They want to avoid a certain identity. I don't want to do that. I will do anything I can to avoid that view of myself being created into myself internally or externally. A very popular one for some people is we don't want to see ourselves in negative lights and so certain kind of negative activities of our mind or heart.

We don't admit, so we can put in blinders: Oh, that's not me. We have all these defensive mechanisms to explain how that's not me or do something, or we hide it, or there's certain aspects of ourselves that we think somehow are beautiful, but we feel that is not deserved or not proper. It's not so uncommon, and it must be a coincidence, but it's not so uncommon that I talk to Irish Catholics and it's a common phenomenon in talking to these particular ones I talk to—I'm sure it's not all of them—where feeling meditative joy is not ok. Seeing your joy, meditation is not ok. Because I don't know if I should fill in the blank why, but you know, there's a certain religious view, this people, some people shaking their heads, that somehow says it's not ok.

And now, on top of that, not only is it not okay to feel meditative joy, but that's also selfish. And your spirit would be out there serving others. Are the Irish Catholics, sir? Who am I not disparaging anyone unnecessarily? I love Irish Catholics, but, you know, it's not that they're not good people. But there's a sad thing in them. It makes me kind of feel sad inside when I

see this kind of phenomenon.

And you know, sometimes a selfing activity is not something we do alone, but whole societies help us to do it, you know, it's a social construct also. So mine, the craving of possession, can take every possible form. One can take anything as mine. It can be, you know, certainly it can be my possessions, my things that I own. And it happens very quickly and seemingly very innocent. Some of you, you're sitting here, and I see, come here. Say you see you're sitting here, and then during the announcement time you rush out to the bathroom, and you come back, and someone has showed up and sat in your place.

That's my place. They took it. You know, it wasn't yours two hours ago, and it's not to be yours in two hours. But somehow, in the process of coming to IMC there has been this very somewhat subtle creative activity in your mind. We're identified, This is my seat for this duration. And if somebody has taken your seat, that could stir up all kinds of things in your mind.

And there isn't perhaps any questioning about looking back in yourself. See how that creative activity has happened to begin with. As I'd like to say, if all of us left tonight in different shoes than we came with, our shoes wouldn't care. That "my shoes," that idea—that's a construction of our mind. It's an activity of the mind. The mind has to have this activity. That it's your shoes is not inherent in the shoe itself.

It's something that belongs to this world of social constructions of thoughts and ideas. And then we engage in that. And some of you, especially, have Birkenstocks. I've noticed, you know, you can get quite upset coming to me, and Birkenstocks have been switched. I was once part of a three-way switch, but Birkenstocks somehow ended up with somebody else's Birkenstocks. But we figured it out because we didn't know who the third person is, but we figured out that it was a three-way switch. And so, you know, either this activity, it happens very quickly—mine, or that's my seat—or it happens slowly, builds up over time, and then there is enough possession of, you know?

So there's things in the world we take possession of, and also people. In some degree, some people possess people in ugly ways. And it could be terrible. But also there is a taking possession of things inside of us. Now, take this as mine. So this is my body, this is my hair, this is my eyesight, this is my whatever.

And to some degree, it's not like my eyesight is someone else's eyesight. Makes some sense to say that, but we can kind of get—it is possible to crave that, cling and get caught by this

odyssey: Who? This is mine for me, you know, take care of. So it's quite an insult then to my sense of mine, my body, when the body ages and changes, my face: This is my face. And then slowly, slowly, the same face begins to sag and get wrinkled, and the teeth do funny things, and, you know, and those eyebrows can begin to sag a little bit, you know?

And you can try to lift them up, and, you know, all kinds of wonderful things people do. It's great. I saw it some years ago in Palo Alto. Still there in business, probably still in business. I walked by. There was a plastic surgery place, and the place looked like it could be in Los Angeles or something, the most beautiful palace kind of look. And what's the image they were trying to portray?

But you know, plastic surgery, just the facade of the place was plastic. So my now, my beauty, my beauty, and then my beauty is something that, you know, has to be carefully guarded. You can't go out into public unless my beauty is there. Oh, it's great. You know, we know. Almost better than Buddhist practice on some attachments is having kids.

Because I like, you know, you think you have to be beautiful and well dressed and everything must be fine and clean. And after we have kids, after you all—baby, especially—it's hopeless, you know. You show up and you have spit up on your shirt, and you know, and you don't even have time. You couldn't care. You don't care, too sleepy to care about your hair, and you know, and you know it's the last thing. We're concerned about your beauty. It's great, you know. You let go, let go.

And people, not kids, have to practice a lot, meditate a lot in there, to let go some of some attachments. So my beauty, you know, or my intelligence, we take possession: This is who I really am. I'm holding on to my intelligence, or my virtue, my goodness. This is—see how I'm holding on to my virtue in some kind of way or other. All kinds of things we take possession, and this is who I really am, but is it really our possession?

It does make sense that they can be something we use and something we care for, but this is something that we have to kind of claim: This is mine. Even something inside of ourselves seems a part of our body or mind. I love the story of Suzuki Rōshi, a Zen teacher, who held up the glasses like this for some students. There's a photograph taken just as he was saying this, and he was holding up glasses like this when he said, These glasses are not my glasses, but you know, about my tired eyes. So you, let me use them. That's nice.

And then there is a Paññāsīha Bhikkhu who teaches here sometimes, and he says, Yes, your body is not yourself. It's not in your possession. You try to hold on to and hold as your pos-

session. However, while you're still kind of involved in this body, you should take care of it at least as good as you take care of your car, you know, maintain it and it has to be well maintained so it can really, you know, serve you on the spiritual path. And if you don't maintain it well, then so you take care of it, but you don't have to hold on: This is mine.

I've known plenty of people who suffer dramatically because they hold on in order to their sense of control, their ability to control what they think is theirs and hold on to it, and not to let it go away when it naturally goes away or is taken away from them. Some mine. So one of the reasons we're talking about all this selfing, it's not because it's philosophically interesting to me—that doesn't really interest me. But why are we talking about it is because there's a tremendous amount of suffering that arises out of people's activity of self. And you know, I think probably a big, huge percentage of people's suffering has some connection to their selfing process.

When, because of the difficulty of defining self in Buddhism, I have kind of a sham shorthand definition of what self is, and Buddhist idea of self, or cut the definition, and I call it self is wind drag, wind drag, wind drag. You know, if you put your hand out the window and slow down the car, it's the wind drag—selfing is wind drag, creating wind drag, and carrying extra baggage just gets in the way. So the first one is the attachment to what is what we call mine, the activity of mining, making into mine. The second is the activity of conceit, of defining myself primarily in relationship to other people, or in contrast to other people. And so, as many of you know, there are three forms of conceit in Buddhism.

There's the conceit of seeing yourself as superior to others, which is quite common in English idea of conceit. There's the idea that you're less than others, you're inferior, and the idea that you're equal. It's not interesting—equal. Also, all three are forms of conceit, because all three have to do with comparisons. You're comparing yourself—even you're equal to someone else. You are involved in comparing yourself to someone.

And then you can ask, What's the alternative to those three? That's just the three options, right? And the fourth option is you don't engage in the activity of comparing. There's no need to make yourself better, worse, or equal—you just are, you know? And don't you go along with how things are. So some of the things we take as mine can also be places where we define myself in relation to others.

So my beauty, my wealth, my status, my relationships, who I am connected to, who my intelligence—many different things we take as being. This is who I am, and who I am is something that can create a tremendous amount of suffering. So, for example, a little story I like

to say is when I was in junior high school. I noticed one day that I had a high forehead, and that wasn't good. Having a high forehead is a whole thing. My hair, when I was a kid, was such a big deal.

I used to pull my hair a lot to see if I could get it to grow longer, because, you know, my friends had long hair, and I wanted to see if I could get it to grow, and all in the hair were split ends. You know, we had long hair, but he had a lot of split ends, and all kinds of issues around hair, going, and then how to braid it. And it was an issue also, you know, back in those days, and the high forehead thing. And so I spent an inordinate amount of time in my classes, because, you know, classes weren't that interesting, not much was going on. So I would be measuring the distance from the top of my nose to my hairline to make sure that it wasn't receding.

It's interesting, because I had this way of measuring with my fingers, you know? Because that was really important, right? Such an important thing. And then there was when I went to my first junior high school dance, and it was okay, but until the end. And it was basically over, and we were all getting told to leave, I guess. And my father walked across the kitchen floor to get me to bring me home.

I was mortified, boy. That was so painful. I was so embarrassed. And so that's, lets you know, I was involved in this selfing activity. You know, my sense of self, how I was seeing, how I was seen in comparison to other people. It was all going on there. And of course, most of you are not teenagers any more, so I imagine none of you are doing this kind of activity any more.

But rather, what I should say is, you're probably still doing it, but you've gotten more refined and sophisticated—the kind of things that really grabbed your sense of self as a ten, probably, you know, doesn't matter so much anymore. If you go out in public with a pimple now, it doesn't really matter. Your hairline doesn't matter quite as much as it used to, and all kinds of things don't matter. And now other things matter, perhaps. So a tremendous amount of suffering exists in human life in this process of comparing self and others, much more than you probably realize.

Yet your suffering has to do with comparing yourself to others—better. We're better in some ways, better at something. Some ways you're worse than—concern, the judgments in comparison. But it isn't just comparison in comparing ourselves to others, but also comparing ourselves to values and ideals. So we hold ideals, we should be a certain way, and we don't live up to them. Or sometimes we do live up to them, and then we get attached to that.

We hold on to that, and that can cause suffering. Also, when you do live up to something—

a kind of another way of taking a self identity. One example: this is who I am. When I was in seventh grade, I had an art class, and we pretended to draw something in a drawing of my left hand. And for the first time in my life, I noticed that there were all these little lines, the needle creases all over the hand, you know, thousands of tiny little wrinkles. No idea. I admitted to many wrinkles for whatever reason, don't they? They may not be wrinkles or call them lines.

So I got fascinated with those. So I started drawing them all in, and the art teacher came over and said to me, Oh, you have no artistic talent. Now, don't laugh at them like that, right? It's so terrible. I mean, imagine telling a seventh grader that. Now I didn't care. I had no investment at all in being an artist or being good at art.

I couldn't care less. It didn't hurt me at all. However, I believed her. She was the authority. So I went through the rest of school believing that I know that is who I was. I'm someone who doesn't have any artistic ability. So that was my sense of self was created. It was an activity. It was a view. And was co-created with this teacher.

And then, in freshman year in college, my roommate was a born-again artist, and you know, which meant that everyone should be an artist. And so I was, you know, I was his roommate. So in the various ways, he kind of tricked me into, you know, drawing. And it turned out I had some talent, a little bit of talent for it, and enough so that I started enjoying it a lot, and I started taking art classes and drawing classes. And in order to take more drawing classes at the university, you had to be an art major. So I became an art major.

I had no intention of majoring in art, but it was the way of taking those classes, and so it was all great, and had lots of fun, and drawing, painting was lots of fun. And then that glorious day happened where I decided I am an artist. And the amazing thing—it's not hard to believe how amazing this is—but the day I identified myself as "I am an artist" was the day I stopped doing art. And in part, I think it was because then I had to do art in order to fulfill the identity, to prove the identity somehow. And somehow that wasn't motivating enough. I couldn't do it for that reason. Somehow it froze. I don't know what happened, but I—and it took many, many years.

It wasn't until I was at the Zen monastery that I started doing some art again. Somehow the Zen, the Zen training can open something in me that allowed me to put at the flow again. So now we think, I am an artist, and that could be innocent. Some of you might be artists, but it is possible to cling to that, and it can cause all kinds of suffering. You have to prove yourself. Or if you make bad art, then you know, your identity is tied with that, or your sense of self is



tied to that.

There's a movie, this phenomenon, so-called *Dead Poet Society*. And in there, there's a scene where Robin Williams takes these boys outside in a courtyard, and he has them all walking around, and then he teaches them, say, you know, teaches them, basically, you should all walk in your own individual way. So that's a great American ideal. You know, be your own person, be an individual, to walk your own way. But that's also a kind of selfing activity. You know, to create your own individual sense of self has a great value in America.

But why should you go to extra trouble, you know, to prove yourself and to be someone special and everyone special just the way they are? And so that's the whole selfing activity, by being an individual, and standing out, and being unique. Or it's also a selfing activity, not being unique, being equal to everyone else, and not, you know, standing out. When I was in Hawaii going to college, there was a very strong Confucian ethic in Hawaiian society because of the Japanese and Chinese influence there. And one of the sayings that was talked about in class was a kind of Chinese saying, The nail that stands up gets hammered down.

And it was quite remarkable to see the degree to which many of the students in the college classes there did not want to excel, did not want to show that they were really good, and you wanted to be just kind of like good, but you didn't want to kind of stand out, because it was dangerous to stand out. And they talked about it. It wasn't something to us, you know, not something that I wholly kind of judge from the outside. But as, you know, someone from the mainland, and so they were trying to construct a kind of self that kind of fits in more, is harmonious. Every society, you know, has its values people try to figure out so they can construct the right kind of self that fits in there.

And I suspect we have it right here in IMC, that we have a certain kind of ethos, a kind of flavor that people sometimes use projection, but sometimes maybe always to go. Some guy told me recently, Oh, been coming here for years, and it seemed like everyone is so kind of reverent and dour, you know, as I don't know, that hate up here. And so, you know, so, you know, he thought my body had to be, kind of be, etc. And I be the kind of person to be here, reverent and dour? Well, I hope that's not, you know. You know, I like your reverence anyway.

So we have it here too, you know. Some people come here. So I suppose to be here, what kind of self I'm supposed to be here? These people here, you know, the trance, these Buddhist types, you know? What do they want? What's the right Buddhist kind of person to be? And so we try to figure out, you know, Oh, that kind of cushion. Not to get that kind of cushion,

because, you know, then I'm a good self, good Buddhist self.

What kind of clothes you wear? You know, I can't wear those, you know, really wild, colorful clothes in IMC, because Buddhists are supposed to be, you know, dull. So it's a view. It's an idea. It's a selfing, so that the third selfing activity is the clinging, what's called craving, to views. And this has to do with a view or an opinion about what essential self is—the essential soul, who I am in essence.

So all the others, you know, the original, the second one of who I am as myself, the conceit part often exists in comparison to others, in relation to others. It's something where you are unique in some kind of way. The view of a self, of who I really essentially am, is something that's more universal. This is what a human being is like. A human being is this essential. This is what a human being is really like, this is the essence and essence of human beings this way.

So it's not such a philosophy or a view, I suppose, something that's unique to you. And so, for example, you know, in America, we might have this view of individualism that, you know, and if it were, we're autonomous individual selves. That's so important. That's a view, and we could have assumed that's true for everyone, and it's not true in some societies. That's not the view of a human being. They have a very different idea of a human being and how a human being should be, and they create a different kind of idea, a social idea of what a self is.

The autonomy itself is not so interesting, or not really relevant, and not really something. It's very interesting that here in America where the idea of autonomous individual is a value that's held up to a high degree, among American and Western Buddhist teachers who've grown up in the culture of this individualism, they teach ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times more the teaching of interdependence than you find in Tibet, India, or traditional Buddhism, you know. So because people felt so autonomous and need to be reminded, are not so. You're not so autonomous.

You have to learn, realize that you're not so separate. That's really important, because it becomes an important mystical experience for people here in the West to realize that not so separate or well connected makes some sense. If you know, if you've been inculcated with a strong sense of being an individual, that you need that kind of teaching. In Japan, where the sense of a social self is so strong, where there, you know, you're not the individual. You're part of an organism that's the society or the family there.

If you become a Buddhist monk, the understanding is you're really—it's really a radical act in Japan where you're stepping outside of our normal social context, or really leaving it. And once you've left it in Japan, it's very hard to step back in. But here in America, you know, I was ordained as a Buddhist monk, as a Buddhist priest. I have lots of ordinations, and now I'll have to just let my hair grow out again and put on a suit and tie. And I can, you know, no one cares about my past that way. But in Japan, it's very hard to get back in again once you've chosen to sever those connections.

So the idea of being, you know, there's a thing ought to teach, Oh, we're all interconnected. I suspect that among some Japanese Buddhists that would put them asleep, or is not interesting, that teaching, because they're already aware of that all too well. So there's ideas of an original sin. Isn't a view that has to do with creating a certain selfing activity: This is who I really am. Or the idea of original goodness. And in the modern world, modern West, a lot of people like to believe the opposite: original sin. We're originally beautiful or there's original goodness inside of us.

That's another view. And sometimes people like to see that coming out of Buddhism. And Buddhism teaches that there's original goodness in all of us. But that's also a view: This is who I am. I am really inherently good, my essence. It's like, you know, it's like putting a veneer over. It's a belief. It's a view. It's not necessary to have that view. Is it necessary to live and see ourselves through an opinion, through a view? Is there an alternative?

Why do we need to? Why are we engaged in this selfing activity? What are we trying to fulfill? What are we trying to prove? What are we trying to accomplish through it? So we construct a view about who we essentially are, and then we live based on that view, often without questioning it.

So as people meditate, sooner or later, often later, the mind will begin to quiet down. And quiet down means that the activity of the mind begins to quiet down. So, you know, if you are really agitated about something that big happened today at work, the mind maybe is going in ten thousand miles an hour, and going this way, that way, and after forty-five minutes sitting, maybe that all those concerns settle down. The mind's not thinking about what happened earlier today so much. You're still thinking some, but what happened at work is kind of a distant memory for a few minutes. Because all that activity, the mind is quiet down.

So it's possible to quiet the activity, the thinking mind, more and more and more. And as we, as the thinking mind, as the activity of the mind quiets down, becomes more tranquil, real, sooner or later reach these levels in the mind where a certain very pervasive, almost constant

but semi-conscious or unconscious or subconscious activity of selfing is operating. So you might not know that you have a view about, “I’m essentially an inadequate person.” That’s who I am, and that’s the nature of the universe. Inherent in the universe is the fact that I was born as an inadequate, unworthy person. That’s a view. That’s a selfing. So Buddhism says that’s not inherent in the universe, or inherent in you.

That’s a view. The story of the mind made. And so in that is a story. You have to be telling yourself the story in order for it to be operating. So there’s a story-telling level of the mind. And so maybe at some point you’re no longer thinking about all the things that happened at work, and about all the plans you have to do for the future, and the mind gets quiet and quieter. At some point you come to this level. You’re not telling yourself this story about your adequacy or inadequacy.

And when you do, then you can start questioning that—not necessarily whether it’s true or false, at which you can get into a quagmire. If your questioning is true, but am I really inadequate? Maybe I’m not. I should do positive thinking. All kinds of things you can do, but what you can do instead is you can just quiet that activity. Don’t engage in it. Don’t try to fix it in terms of in its own language. Just relax that activity of the mind, just like you would relax a muscle.

You don’t have to be engaged in it during while you are meditating. You don’t have to engage in that kind of activity. It can be very hard to let go of certain stories we tell ourselves, certain views, because often you don’t even see them as a story-telling. You see them as a pervasive mood or an emotional state, but sometimes some of our emotions, especially, are more what’s called—sometimes negative emotions are closely connected to stories we’re telling ourselves of selfing, stories of selfing activity.

So to begin quieting the activity and looking deeper and deeper. And so you can’t really get to really deep peace unless, some way or other, you’re willing to put to rest some of the selfing activity that the mind is engaged in. It’s not an easy thing to do. Sometimes it’s a frightening thing to do to let go of that security in that reference we normally have: This is who I am. But to quiet the activity down so we can get to some really deep potential of peace that is there when the activity is not always so busy, engaged.

So here the challenge is not a challenge of philosophy. Is there or is there not a self? It’s a challenge of going from an agitated state to an increasingly peaceful state. And what are you willing to let go of, at least temporarily, to experience that kind of peace? And you know, you’re welcome to pick up yourself again at the end of the meditation. But at least in medi-

tation, can you put it up on a shelf and let yourself sink into a deep level of peace?

One of the advantages of doing that is that if you can experience a sense of well-being that is not tied to any selfing activity or your normal selfing activity, that's going to change your relationship to selfing activity—you're not going to be so invested in it, because it's not going to seem so important, because, you know, a sense of well-being is not dependent on, you know, being a certain way or being a certain kind of person. One of the inspiring people in my life was my great-grandmother, who I was lucky enough to know, and I lived with her for a short while in her little apartment, in a little tenement apartment in Norway where she lived, and she had the spare bedroom I stayed in, and she had this little living room with all this lace, lace over the tables, and she sat in this chair most of the day, and she didn't talk very much, though she was quite lucid.

And sometimes I just liked to go into the little living room with her on the couch and stuff, and just sit there, and sit with her, and just be in her, or be in her, the atmosphere she radiated around her. And I don't really—I didn't really know her that well. So maybe I was projecting. But what I felt when I sat with her was, here was a person who didn't have to be anything for anybody. You know, she was an old woman, she'd done everything. She had all these kids and husbands and gone through all this stuff in life, gone through two World Wars and all kinds of activities, and she had nothing to prove, no one to be, nowhere to go.

And she was just, as she sat there, very content and very peaceful. And to be in the presence of something so peaceful, something so peaceful and content, not needing to prove anything or defend anything or show who they were, just to be, just be—a being was enough—was so inspiring. And then when I started meeting great Dharma practitioners, I started recognizing some of them had the same quality. They can just be them. They just, we say in English, they can just be themselves, but—or some people say they could be, but we can say that they could just be without needing to engage in all this complicated selfing that seems to be the currency, the currency of exchange among human beings.

And I recommend that you go down to the local bank and trade that currency in for something better. And a peace, inner well-being is much better than a whole selfing enterprise. So I hope that beginning to make the whole selfing thing in Buddhism a little easier to understand. If it didn't make it easier, then I didn't prepare the talk. Thank you.