

2007-01-29 It Is Me: I Am Not It

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SPEAKERS

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There's a story in the Zen world of a Zen teacher named Tozan Ryokai. And he was considered the founder, one of the founders of Soto zen, in China. And there's a little story about his enlightenment or some kind of deep understanding that he had. And he'd been a practitioner a monk for many years already. So petitioner, among other things, is someone who, whether directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, is questioning the idea of the self. Who are you? Or another angle would be is questioning all the different beliefs we have About what I am. So you might have the belief that you are your thoughts or you are your feelings or you are your body. Or you are you're who you really are is your ethnicity, or your gender, or your role in society. That's who you really are. And some of these beliefs are not that conscious mean, consciously. Some people don't believe their other car.

You know, that's, you know, however, some people when their car disappears or gets damaged, you know, they realize how much they use their car to define who they are. And they were, you know, for example, or their clothes or their hair or something. Some of us believe how we are our hair is, is really who are our clothes. is supposed to be that people choose their clothes more carefully and choose the words they speak. And so the idea is identify with your clothes, somehow the clothes define who I am. With that definition is a way of showing the world who I want to who I want you to believe I am. And so there's this whole game that we do called reap presentation. For presentation, we use something to represent ourselves. And if if you divide up the re in the present, it means you present again, as if you're not good enough the first time. You feel like you have to present yourself in some special way. And so we put on special clothes or special roles or you behave in particular ways because we want people to see that see us in a certain light, for example, it's really important that people see me as being a kind person. So we kind of everything we say, comes out of our mouth. It's kind of kind. Maybe it's important to see too myself, to show myself to represent myself as being tough. And so everything I say is kind of harsh, tough, because, you know, that's how you get respect. And so we people spend a lot of time week presenting themselves, trying to present a certain side of themselves. And sometimes we really know, this is not who I really am. But you know, this is what I'm trying to do, to be safe or to be approved, to be accepted or be part of the gang or part of the society, whatever. And sometimes, we know it. Sometimes we don't sometimes we believe that representation. We believe the game the mask that we can present to the world, we believe that's really who we are. So one way or other Buddhist practice is questioning this whole idea of how we define ourselves, who we take ourselves to be and ultimately, offering an other alternative to how to be alive. That's not base On the various selfing games that people play the selfing strategies, building up making, building up self making self, creating a sense of I presenting a sense of a sense of I. So this man, toes unreal Chi, has been here as a practice. And there's one that kind of, directly or indirectly, he was probably addressing these kinds of issues. And then one day he was walking across the bridge. And he stopped and he looked over the

edge of the bridge into the water below. And he saw his reflection. And he said, he realized looking at that reflection of himself, he said, That is me. But I am not it. That is me, but I am not it.

And so the question for you is why was that a significant statement? Mine was On a very significant realization understanding for him That is me. So it's his reflection. He's not looking in and seeing somebody else's reflection there. He sees a reflection it's not a fish. He sees reflection and it's you know, it's not some imaginary idea you know look see see, see see an image in the clouds you see a horse in the clouds The clouds are configured and like he's looking down at the ripples in the water and saying, well that's looks like me. He's seeing his reflections his reflection. So that it is me. But I am not it.

So anybody like to make some suggestions about why this wasn't significant understanding photos.

Yes, please.

Something like shadow and light casting. For the water eliminating himself some form of energy.

So shadow in light energy kind of light reflecting off the water. That's what he saw. And so in a sense, it's a reflection of him but that limited quality of reflection, light and dark shadow in light. That couldn't be him, right? He

was speaking metaphorically like an energy force, something

like an aura or something like that and energy of being an aura maybe. Okay.

I guess what I think of is the reflection

shows some aspect of him, but he is much more than that.

So the reflection shows some aspect of him but he's much more than that.

Possibly he recognized himself

but he didn't identify

with it.

So he recognized himself but he didn't identify with it. What does that mean? Well, doesn't your driver's license identify you?

To the police, I guess

is hard to

get into duality with

identifying

with the other

it's semantics.

When

it's an echo in a sense, a reflection in a way isn't Echo. It's not the original, but it is a

it emanated, but it's not it.

Okay, great. Thank you. So right in front of you here, pass it. Hello.

Um, this isn't

one of the ways I would think about it is that we, the self is defined by dualism. What we are is in terms of other things. So by him saying that's not me, I'm not mean she's not defining himself in terms of that. So, when you get down to it, the self is really nothing but a comparison. If you claim yourself it's nothing but a comparison to other objects. And by taking that away that comparison, you don't have a self.

So the self is comparison it's something arises out of comparison Other things are all things which are not self in a sense. But if you take away the comparison then then you know there's no self. In that line of reasoning is very similar to somewhat some circles in the Buddha circles famous definition of conceit, conceit being kind of unfortunate, unhealthy activity of the mind. And conceit is, in Buddhism is considered to consider yourself to be superior to others, as it's often considered here in English word of conceit, but mana the Pali word also means in addition to considering self is superior to others, also means considering yourself to be inferior to others. And it's also considering yourself equal to others.

So what's left and what's left as you don't compare? Don't bother. That's what's left. Similar what you're saying So

really he meant that he is self and the images things the manifestation of itself. Therefore he is not the shadow he's not that's the manifestation. We are self

terms really mean efficient

manifestation of the bigger self.

Okay, thank you once more

so I just took it to mean sort of somewhat similar to what this gentleman said the sort of the first half of the statement was the, the ordinary understanding. That's me that's my physical form that's my outward appearance. And then the second half is the sort of deeper understanding that that physical form that body that personality that showing up even in the water is is is not is Not self is not anything, there's no, there's no sort of there there, there's no, there's no essence to it. So that's what I took it to mean. So between the first and the second parts, he comes to this understanding that, that I have a body, but that's not my body.

And you might also know that like, you might

point out that the reflection is in the river. And the river is a popular metaphor for things are constantly changing. And so the idea that this you see the self there, but the self is something is constantly changing. It's constantly changing, doesn't qualify as some permanent notion of self.

Here, Maryland,

the dog in

his dog and it causes the reflection, but the reflection doesn't cause

I mean, he can look over and create the reflection

but the reflection can't create him. And I mean, in my own personal experience I happen is a lot my projections take over me and start You know, running around so

Oh, so we've chosen

he created the projection in the sense that the projection doesn't create him. But in your case, you create the projection and then projection creates you.

Yeah, like that just taking that pot realizing that you cause the projection and the projection doesn't cause you causality. So to

be to be awakened or enlightened for you is to see the projection leave it as projection. And to be unenlightened, perhaps, is to believe that projection, projection come back at you. And you kind of inhabit the projection. So the famous famous Chinese story of the painter who's painting a very realistic dragon. He's a pretty close in Canvas, painting the dragon. And then he finally steps back and look at what he's created, get the bigger picture of it, and it's so realistic frightens him and runs away. So some of us creative you know, we're very realistic idea of who we are. And in fact some of us are frightened by what we see when we created the image we created. So, you know, it is not me, but I am it. So, it is not me but it is not me. It is me, but I am not it's right. And

So, the idea that certainly any any anything that we point to and say this is me, so, could be reflection, it could be an idea, it can be a feeling, it can be someone else's projection it can be sensation in your body anything you point to this is me is seen as being false. It is not. So, it is me in a certain degree, but I am not it. So, there's a tendency sometimes in Buddhist circles for some people who adhere the teaching Buddha's teaching of itself to one a very quickly dismiss anything is being self saying there is no self, people say there is no self and in extreme forms, you find people who will walk around kind of like a Buddhist zombies saying, you know, you know, you ask them, How are you? And they say they say, you can't answer that question. You know, there's, there's, there's no me here Or, you know, how are you? And they say, oh, there's a, you know, there's a lot of heat happening. vibration. What? Do you look angry?

So there's no way that not owning anything as being me. It kind of took pushing everything away and kind of you kind of get a sense sometimes you're not really seeing anybody they were feeling anybody or no ownership in a sense. And then and then of course, the opposite is too much ownership too much

identifying to holding on tight, not going to like anything go and toes on the census kind of seeing both sides who say, it is me. There's kind of ownership there's some responsibility, some saying there is a connection that reflect reflection in me. There is a connection, that I'm not going to limit myself to that reflection. I'm much more than that. Some of you said and what what is happening If you try to define that more, then you have another reflection. As soon as you have you define what's more, then you have something that you're pointing to again, you say, if I say, Oh, that's me. Of course your physical appearance can be your true self. Right? We all know that we don't take our, you know, our physical beauty or ugliness or, you know, clothes as being a true essential self. We're all wise enough to that, right. But then we say, well, that's not me. But you know, this wonderful feeling of wholeness that's inside of me, that's really me. Or my intention, my motivations, my aspirations, that's really me. Just taking something else as being the reflection, you're pointing to something that is me. It is you. But you're much more than that. As soon as we define something and limit ourselves to that. We're limited, we're contained, we're contracted. And so he Oh sorry, the equation I am not it. It is me but I am taking some ownership, some responses some some responsibility for what's there. So these people who walk around Buddha zombies, part of the difficulty with them is they don't take responsibility for what's going on the feelings or thoughts, the words anything. But there is a sense of responsibility. It is I but I am not it. So then, then you can say, Well, of course, anything that's limited can't really be who the true self is. The true self is unlimited. That's just another reflection. That's another idea, saying, you know, the self is unlimited. As soon as you try to define yourself, you run into some certain kind of problems. So is an alternative to defining yourself just as it is their alternative to create Seat turns conceit is not to play the game of comparison. The alternative to defining anything as a self is not to try to define anything yourself, not live in a world that requires you to have a self definition. But at the same time taking responsibility for your feelings, your thoughts, your impulses, your aspirations and everything.

When I was a new Zen student, I had a kind of informal conversation with a Zen priest. And he said to me, there are two routes to kind of understanding yourself, they go in opposite directions, but they come out to the same place. One is the route of negation where you see that everything There is no self. You see, everything does nothing qualifies as a self. And the self kind of disappears in that vacation process. The other route is to see that everything is itself and one of the very famous quotes in the professional world comes from a Tibetan teacher, I think was collagen fishy. And the quote goes something like this wisdom tells me I'm nothing. Wisdom tells me I'm nothing love tells me I'm everything. And the between the two my life flows between those two.

So love tells me wisdom tells me I'm nothing. Love tells me I'm everything in between my life between the two of my life flows. So to take her out, in either way, if somehow the self disappears in both ways, So, it is it is me, but I am not it allows you to disappear allows you to become transparent. So, another way of talking about this is you know, self disappearing himself becoming infinitely large is both both routes can be significant for people.

So the route of becoming big is there was once a fly that fell that landed on the back of an ant and it was a big deal for the head. It was fly was heavy and the flood the and tried to shake the fly off. Try to beg for mercy. Try to do all kinds of ways to get that fly off. Finally the fly flew away. And the fly flew and landed on the back of an elephant. It was not a big deal for the elephant. Elephant hardly noticed. So the question is for you in this analogy, what kind of clothes Do you wear? Do you wear the clothes or the net? Or the clothes of an elephant? Many people wear the clothes of an ant. And everything that happens to them is such a big deal as such a big impact weighs them down. Everything happens to them kind of you know, some people are constantly negotiating, negotiating the world by trying to see how what will happen in the world feeds back on defining themselves saying who they are. Is this good for me? Is it bad for me is this building me up or knocking me down? It's just critical me was just

praising me. It's all in reference to the self. And that's being like an ant in the world is the fly. An elephant to be an elephant is to feel yourself so big that the affairs of the world doesn't affect you so much. someone tells you that your mother wears army boots. You know, most of us are big enough, take that. But it's all kinds of things that can happen that trip us up, we kind of were wearing the clothes of an ant. And part of the function of Buddhist practice is to put on the clothes of an elephant. Still close. It's still kind of thing but you can actually kind of feel quite big. So when I was a number of times in my practice, I felt the shift from being small to becoming big. And the one little exam. One example is when I was in the kitchen in the monastery and the first day and I came in the kitchen the fall. I've never been in, worked in the kitchen before in the kitchen, appeared to me really big, and I was really small and then. The whole year working in the kitchen, kind of mastering the kitchen work, I got pretty good at it. And then I remember the last day I was going to work in the kitchen the following fall. I knew it was my last day. And I walked in the kitchen, and the kitchen seemed really small. And I seem really big.

The kitchen's dimensions, the kitchen hadn't changed in a year.

And I hadn't grown shrunk much in a year. But somehow the sense of my presence in relationship to the room that changed with my mastery over the room. I wasn't intimidated by it so much. And the number of times in my life I have seen where certain situations where I felt kind of small or intimidated or insignificant in relation to something that somehow I grew or developed or something and I don't know a lot I became bigger to get bigger than the situation. Bigger than just you know, sometimes things that were quite intimidating. Sometimes I had that relationship to Buddhism. When I was a new practitioner, Buddhism seemed like so huge. It's one of the great world religions. You know, who am I, you know, puny little 20 year old who's going to try to deal with this big world religion and struggle with it and all that. And some of you know the story I like to tell of when I was pretty new to Buddhist Buddhist practice stuff. I sat down to meditate one day, and it was a Zen sitting so you sit facing the wall, like this far away is the wall. And this and I elucidated which I don't do, you know, in ordinary life or ordinary minds, and but somehow that happened, and this massive Roman column, rose up in front of me and written down the column in some kind of Roman column that shows majesty in authority like the front's of banks, right. And so written down the column Was there letters engraved and painted black through letters z, e, n. I was a zen student. And then I went in this and I don't know where the list nation stopped and reality kicked in. But as I remember it, I went to embrace this column. As I did that the column vanished and I fell forward hit my head against the wall. So, you know, Buddhism was this great, big, Zambia's big, big authoritarian thing, you know, something to hold on to for stability and just bigger than you and provide safety and all that. And over the years that our practice, Buddhism has shrunk and shrunk and shrunk, it's gotten smaller. And, you know, until finally, you know, I don't actually think Buddhism exists.

So, you know, that might be a problem, but for some of you And so, you know, there's kind of your, your sense, your sense of self changes over time. And then there's another approach, you know, disappearing. So, the things in life can bother us. So, you know, there's kind of it can be noisy here to meditate here at IMC, there's a lot of traffic sometimes people come in late and the door opens and closes. Sometimes people come in the middle of sitting and they walk across a creaky floor and they get those offers and you know, the creaky stuff and all kinds of sounds can happen. And so we hear sounds sounds occur. And then what happens to that sound when it kind of travels through us? here if we have a single English in English expression, hooks have hooks inside of me, which means that things get stuck there are I like to think of barriers, we stick up a barrier, and the sound hits the barrier. So like one barrier would be, this is my precious meditation time, that it was really important for me to get concentrated. And if you really kind of, you know, this is my chance to get concentrated, enlightened. And so I'm going to protect myself from everything else. Everything is nothing has to

bother me. Nothing should bother me, nothing should fear with my meditation, my mind meditation. And so it's hitting something. It's hitting the sense of mind that sense of identity and hits it. And it's unnecessary to hold up that barrier, that hook. It's possible to relax that hook and the sound goes right through. It, isn't it the sound bothers us, but we're bothering the sound. We're interfering with a sound. System lot of different things happen in life. And this is true visions of life or things are happening. And they can encounter something inside of us. It's a belief and attachment of fear, something that we've created, we put up a hook that we've created. And so rather than what one to one strategy is to keep What's up, up, but then try to fix the world around us, lock the door. So then what comes into play after us. So no one makes any sounds. And or come and complain someone you know, shush, everybody. That's one one approach is try to fix the world. Another interesting approach is to relax whatever is it's being held up. And then the sounds eventually the world don't strike anything. Now one of the things that the experiences of the world strike is the sense of self, the self representation, the self concept, the self projection that we have the self identity. So it's possible to relax that sense of self. That sense of so that hold on to it not weighted. And when it's waves, then the things are the will is not going to attack you in the same way. So if identify strongly with my car, the car that I drive proves my manhood. Then if my car has to go into the shop and get repaired, and I'm given some beat up old little, I don't know what

Subaru Yes.

Imagine that. Not even read. Then, you know, it's kind of, like, you know, it's kind of you might think that I'm not really a man, right? Because I'm much driving a big red car. And so the sense of self video of manhood being defined by the car somehow, that's what I'm holding up. If I'm not kind of don't have that up. The sense of that idea of manhood that have to defend and prove, then doesn't matter if the experience of what car I drive which is coming so they do have as we relax, the sense of self parts of it becomes transparent becomes kind of invisible or transparent or translucent or, or just kind of empty, just passes right through us as emptiness of self. So the Subaru is not the Subaru is me, it's my Subaru right now. But I am not the Subaru, much certainly more than the Subaru but also I'm not putting define myself by the Subaru. I mean, let myself be big, perhaps much bigger than the experience of a car. Or I'm going to let myself be empty. glorious, glorious, gloriously empty. So to say whose toes on says it? It is I, but I am not it. That part that I am not it is really important.

And rather than trying to define what that is that's not it is possible to just be empty. Another way of saying being empty is to say you're relaxed, very relaxed about this whole thing of self. So any thoughts? Questions? Yes.

So what about when someone hurts you? Well, they're certainly They can be lots of hooks in there that people can have. So it's I think it's important to see two sides, there's a side of what we're doing our contribution to our suffering. So for example, someone might intentionally cause me harm. But it might actually touch, some identity that I have. It might threaten some identity I have, that I'm holding up, that maybe is extra needed. And some people, for example, get hurt by people. And then they get for whatever reason, they get attached to hold on to being the victim, or being or get attached to blaming someone else. And blame is a bit different than holding on to the blame. So there can be kind of things that we do that we create. The question is, if someone hurts us, should we just be a pushover or should we just kind of leave it let it go? And I think in Buddhism, it's just No, you can look Buddhists have a practice of looking at what their contribution to clinging is are you clinging to Anything, but then still go back. And if you can take care of yourself in a situation so how do you take care of yourself in a situation depends on the situation where you're hurt, sometimes just enough to say stuff. I don't want you to keep doing that. And that's enough. Sometimes you, you can't say that and the best thing to do is to leave and get out of there. Sometimes the best thing to do is to call the police. And that's what you

should do. Sometimes you ask for mediation in a facilitator come and help. And sometimes there's a famous

Indian

Buddhist teacher,

who

there was a woman who someone had tried to rob her or something in the streets of India. And she kind of had fended herself off into the attacker off. And then she went to the teacher and said, you know, maybe teaching loving kindness Teaching all this, you know, being very kind, compassionate with time. And, you know, I was attacked in the streets, what should I have done? And he said, My dear, with all the loving kindness you could muster up, take your umbrella and hit it over the head of the guy.

So, your question is huge. And probably I should have asked you some questions for clarification. But what I'm trying to say is there's two sides, there's a practical side, and the practice side should never be ignored. And, but there's also the inner inner side, the practice side, that is, what are we doing, given this has happened to us? And what is it what can we do? What should we do, and looking at ourselves, what's within ourselves? And then if we look at ourselves inwardly, then we realize that maybe different things are needed inwardly Sometimes what's needed is a lot of compassion, care, love for ourselves, given that we've been hurt. And sometimes what's needed is very ruthless. Looking at ourselves and understanding how we're holding gripped attached to something we don't need to be attached to.

to speak to you next Make sense? Sorry.

It's way too hard issue. Yeah. Please.

And finally,

finally the person who is attacking her, paused and said, What are you doing her You know, what would you say was her state? And what had she come? What did she have to come to to be able to do that? In the sense of what you're talking about? Is there, the hooks and the rest of it? How do you see that?

So what does it take, for example to

the people, you know, so Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, trained people, before they went off and did civil disobedience, they trained people. So what kind of training what kind of preparation is required to be able to stand for a cause? Fight for a cause non violently, we know you're gonna put yourself in harm's way and still be willing to because it's counterintuitive, you know, most people. So certainly one of the biggest things is a person has to deal with their fear and not be afraid or not to let the fear have the upper hand. And that's a whole training to work through fear, fear, all kinds of fears come into play. Fear of pain. Fear of death fear of all kinds of things. And other is a person has to work through their anger. So yeah, so that anger doesn't get the upper hand. Rage doesn't get the upper hand. And so it has to be some way of working through anger or heavy anger, at least, you know, not be something that catches works on us.

Related to that is sometimes where people have to work through their beliefs, sometimes their beliefs that we've inherited from our society or family of various place, and with how certain things get taken care of. And some people are quick at the trigger. Some people are Believe, believe that the only way to get the way in the world is through aggression, through aggressive voice perhaps, or aggressive stance, posturing or aggressive action. And so there has to be some re education about what are those beliefs so that those beliefs don't catch us and force us and compel us to act a certain way. There might also have to be re education or be understanding about the sense of self. You know, who we are. And it can be humiliating is from certain points of view, it can be misleading to be in the gutter and having people kicking you and beating you. And in many situations who shouldn't allow that to happen, but there's a greater cause that their civil rights people were were working against. And in because of their cause, it gave certain ability and power to what they were doing. They weren't just allowing themselves to be beaten up. But they were actually saying something very powerful to whole nation. So both the sense of sense of self that we read into it might have to be lessened or relaxed, but also certain things we have stopped believing in and other things we have to start believing in. So they have to understand the power of the internet. Act, those kinds of action have? I think so. So just kind of re education. So I have a tremendous belief that

the,

the short term solutions of aggression have long term negative consequences. So in the short term, you can sometimes either aggressively get your way, but the long term, maybe it's not so useful. So the trick is to find non aggressive ways to protect yourself, take care of yourself, make what have what you need to do happen. And so there's a lot of ways a lot of training people can do to learn non aggressive ways to work with conflict. And one of the ways which is relatively popular these days, which I think we're going to have a training here at IMC in about a month, is nonviolent communication.

So non aggressive communication, learning the skills of that

that's my answer.

The last one, Jennifer

Just a comment that, um, I really appreciated what you said, we're quoting the Zen priest about the sort of two paths to the same ending of misunderstanding of itself. Because sometimes when I look inside myself, I see all variety of different personas from sort of angel to axe murderer, and I'll get very identified and sometimes it's not, it's not easy to see during those times. How that has anything to do with you know, coming to some broader understanding of not self but the end result is almost always that if I if I look and I see Oh, that too. And after a while, it's like well, I'm all of that. No, so then what I am I will not really much of anything that I can pinpoint. Certainly not this one thing that I whatever that seems like the most outward thing. So it does seem like in the end those to converge, but I've never heard that before. So it was helpful. Great.

So

So some of you, I'll see you again in two months.

So you have two months

to realize.

And

we'll come back and they'll celebrate your realization with us.

So thank you and I look forward to seeing you soon. I hope