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SPEAKERS

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So if a person wants to walk, it doesn't work very well, to only put one's attention on the right leg and have no attention on the left leg. In order to walk, you have to have kind of somehow equal attention both legs. Imagine someone all the attention on one leg, maybe there'd be hopping around or the left leg would be dragging along. It doesn't work you have to have somehow tension so we can even propose legs. So it is in the same sense there. We could say there are two legs to mindfulness practice. And it really necessary to have your helpful to have attention and equally on both legs. However, many people focus mostly on one exclusion to the other. And the two legs I'd like to posit tonight is the First one is paying attention to what's happening, which is kind of generic for where he's talking about and Vipassana, mindfulness meditation. So just noticing what's happening. And that could be noticing what's happening externally. And so being being present what's happening to certain presence of mind. So you really hear inhabiting and living, aware of what's happening in this world that you're living in, not spaced out, not lost, future thinking or past thinking or fantasy. It could also mean take attention to what's going on inside of here, inside of oneself, one's feelings, one starts with one's beliefs, one's reactions, what's going on in the body, to kind of see the whole the whole show, inner and outer show, think attention to what's happened to recall that what's paying attention to what's happening. The other leg is paying attention to what your relationship is, to what's happening. So there's what's happening and then how you relate to it. And There are some people who only pay attention to what is happening at the end without really noticing that there's a big, big thing going on big elephant in the room, which is your relationship, your attitude, your reaction to what is happening. That relationship. This kind of this way is very important. I read recently, someone who defined religion as being a set of beliefs and values and practices, that has some kind of ultimate meaning and spirituality as to do about our relationship to those beliefs and practices and values. So you know, so in Buddhism, there's the teachings of the Buddha. And then there's what, what is our relationship to those teachings? There's the Buddha, for example, and what's our relationship to the Buddha? There's a set of practices that we teach, and what's your relationship to those practices. So spirituality in this definition has to do with that relationship. And so taking some care and some attention to your relationship to you and what you bring to the table, what you bring to the equation is very important. And it isn't that you're unimportant actually, here, you're very important in your relationship, where what you do, what you contribute, is a key part of what we investigate. If you only focus on what you contribute your relationship, which some people sometimes do, then, you know, it's pretty lopsided as well. There's kind of a dead end kind of kind of spinning around in your own head, not the right word is your own pattern or what you spin around in. So there's an art to going back and forth, and noticing what's happening and your relationship to it.

So for example, we do breath meditation, focusing the attention on the breath. And so the breath can be a certain way it can be, for example, it can be hard to be present for the breath, the mind is so easily

distracted, might keep spinning off. And that's kind of the basic what's happening is trying to be with a breath, the mind is spinning off. And but we usually don't leave it that simple. We enter into a relationship with that phenomenon. meditators could commonly be at get angry, get discouraged, they could get, they can have a judgement what that means. So the part of the relationship is judging. This means that my meditation is going poorly. This means I'm a bad meditator. This means that I should be doing knitting, you know, so we enter in relationship where we're judging the situation to add meaning to it or judgment. We also then sometimes based on that our relationship is emotion. We can get discouraged, we can get angry, we can get afraid, we can get anxious, we can get embarrassed. So all these things that happened in relationship to this basic thing was going on. Or we could have some kind of strong volitional activity that right arises in relation to this, we see this is what's going on. And because of that, I'm not going to try harder. I'm going to bear down the breath, or I'm going to, you know, try something else. I'm going to, you know, I'm going to, you know, there's all kinds of decisions that are made that come out of that relationship to what's going on. So for example, with my wandering mind, on retreat, I noticed that if I'm relaxed, about the wandering mind, that I actually get more settled more quickly, than if I get anxious about the wandering mind. I get caught up in relating to anxiously Oh, this is bad, I must do something and kind of making those meetings and stuff, I kind of I kind of spin myself out even more. But if I'm very relaxed about it, and kind of, you know, basically it's okay, I'm not bothered by it, then it's a lot easier to kind of get all that phenomena of thinking kind of settle away, come back. So, you know, that's a really shift to, you know, reading but it can be towards anything. So, in in, in Buddhism, there are kind of the series there's kind of divide Buddhism, between those relationships we can form with our experience, which are healthy or health producing, and those which are unhealthy or unhealthy producing and the was not healthy in some kind of medical way, but maybe in a kind of spiritual way. So the unhealthy ones are things that are is the kind of summary in three kind of three kind of broad categories is relationships that somehow entailed greed, or ill will, or delusion, confusion. And so when we, when we relate to what's happening, I agree, I want that I want you know, that if you if that's strong enough that momentum of desire, greed, lust of craving, it's called Buddhism a kind of a poison. Because it can have such a big impact on our body or heart or mind, our emotions and everything. And I certainly see it in my own body. And that's why, you know, one of the one of the things I use when the wonderful meditation for me is that I can pick up in the course of the day, certain kind of momentum in my relationship to the world and myself, my reactions and my desire is kind of getting things done, whatever. And I think everything's fine until I sit down to meditate, and then I feel Wow, all that momentum I was doing that I was doing my daily life is held in my shoulders and my arms and my chest and my cheeks and knows all kinds of places, the muscles kind of kind of revved up a little bit of time. And meditation gives me a chance to, to settle that down.

And so, so, you know, it can be innocently enough that momentum, but also I can kind of feel the way kind of kind of creates a kind of unhealthy situation in our body, when we kind of stressed out a lot of greed, or same thing around ill will or hate. So if we really have strong ill will to what's happening, we're in a relationship to it. So we can have strong desire for spiritual life. And it can be a little bit unhealthy to do that, because of this 3d for it. And I've known people involved in Buddhism, for him their relationship to Buddhism to Buddhist practice and Buddhist ideas and values. Their relationship is really big problem. But because they're relating to this great world religion, that's ultimately perfect, right and great and, you know, who Who are they to argue against it? They're so inspired. They don't look at themselves in relationship to it to their current blinded by this greatness of Buddhism so called greatness, so called Buddhism. And what we choose, we constrain ourselves to look back, turn the mirror of attention back to ourselves, how am I relating to this? Even if something is really wonderful? Am I relating it to it in a way that is healthy or unhealthy? This is a 3d universe a very broad range of relationships, or is it ill will or hate? Or is it confused? The opposite of those which are considered the three broad, healthy, non poisonous or health producing attitudes or relationships are generally the

opposite of these intense generosity, love and wisdom. So is there a sense of generosity to what's going on? So when I described to you my experience in meditation, that I found that being relaxed about my wandering mind was helpful for me. It was it says kind of a generous for generous, so get that Gil's mind is wondering Again, and I was it generous to it. In fact, what I learned to do sometimes was kind of uh i don't know if this is, you know, if you start slipping on the sidewalk in wet sidewalk or something, if you go with a fall briefly, just very briefly, you're more likely to catch yourself, then if you try immediately just catch yourself. Hope you have that experience. And so the same thing with a wandering mind, I kind of go with it a little bit and converge generally. So it's okay, go where you want to go mind and then it's kind of like I'm signing up next to it, noticing it be present for it. And then I kind of just kind of once up next to it, then I bring the mind back to the present. So I would say that the more generous and saying, Oh no, that no good lousy thinking mind. I gotta rein it in. poundage is specific to submission. So there can be you know, generosity. There could be love. One of my favorite definition for meditation is by Chilean prosa. He said meditation is the continual act of befriending oneself. Not great. So we can talk about relationship, so much as so much has to do with the relationship, as they say, this is our relationship. So you can, are you defending yourself? Are you becoming more friendly? Is there a loving or kind relationship being created in meditation. And again, I've known plenty of people who sat down to meditate and has not been a kind approach. they've not been friendly towards themselves or to their experience. And so to cultivate a kind of sense of kindness, generosity, of friendliness, of love, towards yourself towards one's experience towards the world, is greatly helpful for doing this kind of practice we're doing here and is there wisdom is there some sense of being paying attention and kind of be discerning being wisely investigative Kind of beginning understanding what's going on, as opposed to just taking the surface appearance of what's happening. There's some kind of kind of probing looking more deeply, or the causes and conditions, what's happening here. What's the potential here? There's a whole range of things that wisdom can reveal that are more than just a surface appearance of how things are at the moment. So how are we meeting the world? How do we meet ourselves? What kind of relationship are we having? If you don't investigate this? Because maybe as an occurred to you, because you think it's unimportant, then you're gonna have a relationship regardless, your system is going to enter into relationship to your life.

And so what we're actually doing Buddhism is to take some responsibility or some attention, some wit and apply some wisdom understanding to this domain that's happening anyway. An automatic is often a habit, old habits kick in and you Not to leave the old habits the way they are. But to begin, perhaps having a little more choice, a little more responsibility, a little more freedom in relationship to these old habits, and then finding other ways of relating to our experience. One of the ways we relate to experience in mindfulness meditation is by leaving things alone and just paying attention. So rather than rather than actively arousing generosity or kindness or wisdom, one approach is kind of just going to call kind of Middle Way, which is not to be in relationship to the experience except to pay attention to do it except to notice what it is. So and this is a very important thing. Because if we're if we're simply changing our relationship to new relationship, then the mind is still in relationship to everything. There are healthy relationships to be had. There's healthy choices to be made. But your mind is always active, always engaged. I know I think some Buddhists in America put a high value on interrelatedness interdependence. The world is so interdependent interrelated, as if it's a ultimate good. But if you go back to teaching the Buddha, the Buddha didn't take interrelatedness as being the ultimate good. If anything, he's taught us to be in the problem. And we don't have to kind of accept either one that's ultimate good or the problem, but there's something about it for always in relationship, then you're always going to be expanding energy always going to be kind of busy and active and going, and you're not going to have a real vacation. And meditation or Nirvana is kind of like a vacation. From always being in relationship, always being involved in so nowadays, that we have this wonderful technology that connects us so thoroughly. It used to be pretty wonderful, pretty marvelous, you know, to have a

telephone, you call, you know, relatives back in Norway we've called them you know, it was pretty amazing, pretty rare event them so expensive back then the call. And then people had cell phones and usually that was pretty amazing. And now some people I know just can't stand how connected they are. The amount of emails and phone calls and stuff coming all the time all the time and the need to feel like you're connected now is involved. For some people start starting to become a problem. This blessing, people are overly connected. So the same thing with the mind. The mind can be overly connected, always engaged, always wanting to be in a relationship. Even healthy relationships. So the Buddha, he divided the activity of the mind into these two categories, healthy and unhealthy. And he said that he for himself, he said, let me switch, draw what is unhealthy and engage in what's what's healthy. However, if I said if I always gave engaging was healthy, it's also tiring for me to do that. So it's necessary also to learn how to drop the healthy activity, healthy relatedness. And this one can be very hard for some people, it can be kind of makes sense to drop what's unhealthy, but it can be very frightening for some people to drop even the healthy relatedness because so much of who they think they are, and who how they orient themselves to life and how they find themselves safe in the world has to do with how they are in relationship. But the idea of not forming a relationship not being in relationship to things just being present in a fool clear, luminous, transparent way, can be very disorienting. And some people that I don't I don't want to do that people can protest dramatically. You're not expected in Buddhist spirituality, to drop once and for all, all the relating. Relating is important part of life. But it's considered to be important to be able to have the ability to live free of relating. So you're not a slave to relating. You're not driven by it. So some, I've heard some Buddhist teachers talk about coming down coming be able to depend on having the ability to come to zero to the zero point.

In other words, what I think what they mean is the point where the mind is not always actively in relationship to everything and everywhere and every you know, every time just the activity of relating, relating relating has come to rest has been put to peace. And so when the movement and momentum and To always relate for against things and experiences for everything, when that's put to rest and things can just be as they are without a relationship. That's a zero point. And from that zero point, it gives an amazing vantage point of amazing vantage point. It gives a person amazing power to understand and see what is going on in the rest of life. What's going on in the world of relating relating. It also gives them the ability to choose much more wisely, how they want to relate to what the experiences if you don't have that zero point, then little bit here B you're a slave will be driven by something which is compulsive, something which is kind of has has you. So the idea of settling in meditation for examples is settle all the relatedness and just be and then from that beingness in a sense, then when it's appropriate to How you want to relate to yourself to the world around you? Now, last thing I'll say before we can have a discussion about this is as a person that explores the relationship you have, with anything inexperienced at all that relationships very interesting. But at some point, one of the things we start questioning is there's two, two sides to a relationship, right? There's what's happening. There's your relationship. There's the one that's having the relationship. At some point, when you when the relatedness relating stops enough, quiets down enough, because peaceful enough, then you realize that the first part of the equation, the one that's relates the one that was relating, that relating one doesn't exist, apart from being in relationship. Got that or say differently, that the one that was relating the one that that you know the subject of the relationship or the agent of the relationship, you and the relationship itself is an activity of relating. It doesn't exist apart from being an activity of relating. So that's another reason why people that are frightened or reluctant to let go of all relating. Because if that's who you are, as a subject, what's left? You stop the relating. And what what's you know, what's left is being at peace, phenomenal peace. So, what's happening and your relationship, two legs to walk on? So now it's your turn. Do you have any comments or questions or anything you'd like to bring up? Yes. If you can use the mic and be helpful.

I have a question. About relating to things going on in the world that are not good things. Right? So going doesn't want to relate with love and acceptance to evil in the world. But it also doesn't want to relate with hate. What, what is the attitude that Buddhism advises towards things in the world?

I know listening to that my relationship to that question is that is too abstract. And it lends itself then to, you know, single response. I'd rather kind of has any more specific and say, you know, in this situation, because I think it's often the response is situational. So in some situations, perhaps, in different situations call for different kinds of responses.

That's, that's true. I was thinking as I was asking the question in terms of, or in terms of

the political situation in Burma,

whatever

places Where I don't have much control, I don't have much direct relationship. And my my tendency is I can't do anything about it, avoid it.

But that doesn't seem like a healthy relationship either.

No, I don't think so. I think that the think that we do kind of violence to ourselves if we don't. If we you know, it's in Buddhism, that ignorance or avoidance, ignoring things, creates bad karma, which is another way of saying it's unhealthy in some way or other. And when there's situations in the world are big enough, that impacts a heart in a big way, that if we ignore it, or turn away from it, that we do kind of violence to ourselves or we can close ourselves down. But the question is, how do we respond to things that we can have no direct effect on? So you know, there's no There's, sometimes there's doing a creative work, if it's important enough for you to find some way to have to contribute to be helpful. So there's a woman who's going to come here. Today at nine o'clock, she was making an announcement. She's a longtime member here, and she wants to do a garage sale in her house in Palo Alto, for a cause, and Burma is she, and she's connected to her relative is Burmese. So she wants to kind of get help. So that's an example of someone who's kind of, you know, we can kind of plug in other people here and try to think in asking me about how could they plug into support the movement, what's going on in Burma. So some people want to get involved. Other people you know, so there's so many causes in the world, so many tragedies in the world, you can't respond to all of them, but you can be impacted by them. And then you can, you can. So for example, for me, when I'm inspired or moved or, you know, by the things, I'm troubled by One of the one of my responses is, I can't take care of that, that's just too much. But I think I'll try to be a better teacher. I'll try to I'll try to teach better. Do this thing I'm doing here better try to make a difference here, if people suffering here try to help transform people here. So, I've been moved, I've been changed by that. And I'm channeling my the way I've been moved by it to something hopefully for good here. And that's meaningful for me to do that, because I can't do it all. And hopefully, there's a way in which it all spreads out. And, and, and so, you know, some unseen unseen ways that spreads out from here. The so then the question is, you know, you brought up the idea of, you know, is there a place I know if you brought it up exactly, but is there a place for anger? Is there a place for love is love you the universal response to all things so generosity or is there a time for, for you know, angry or violent responses You know how to Buddhist response respond? And it takes a fair amount of discussion that that's how thick if that's kind of also what you're pointing to. And one is that the I think Buddhism would say universally categorically, that there is no healthy place in the world for responding with hostility. However, and the reason why there has to be hostility is very important. That word hostility is very important is that the word anger in English has a wide range of meanings. And so

when when Buddhists say you know, don't be angry, then raises a lot of questions here in the West, because there can be ferocious saying no, they'd be ferocious, taking a stand on something without there being hostility and that Sometimes called anger. And so, but what Buddhists will say there's no place for hostility. And so the challenge for Buddhists This then is how do you find an alternative relationship? And the one that the Buddha in his discourses encouraged least his monastics he didn't say this to laypeople so much, but to monastics, was that you should always hold the person who was the hostile towards you, with loving kindness. Try to find that and you might actually see Buddhist monastics are allowed, they're allowed to bear arms. And However, they are theirs, they are allowed to strike out in self defense. I think they technical languages do like to strike out as a way of escaping. So if someone's coming and going to, you know, stab them, they're allowed to put up their hand and lock the thing away. So they'll have to defend themselves in a sense, however, with one caveat Only if there is no hostility in their hearts. So, that's a high, you know, it's a high.

So, you know, high value. And, and so, given given such a high bar in a sense, what it necessitates is spiritual training, to train oneself. You know, it might take a long time. And for me in terms of you know, being my, my, my initial interest in Buddhism, one of my interest was that I wish I had a very strong pacifist beliefs and but my personal beliefs were not being passive. They involved being involved, they they involved, being willing to do non violent civil disobedience that potentially could put my life on the line. And I was afraid of dying. So I felt really bad that that I couldn't live my beliefs because that fear and so I was looking for something kind of training some kind of way to deal with that fear. And, and when I went, you know, what I came across was Buddhism, some high powered Buddhist training could help with that fear, so that when the time came, I could respond from my beliefs. So I'm going on and on this addressing four is important you, you want to do

in what you said originally, you said that the positive Buddhist way of relating to some thing, and you emphasize the love and the acceptance and, and those kinds of things. But I think there's this other side, which is relating to something as being negative, but without his hostility, and that was what I was looking for. How do you maintain that position of non hostile and still, as you say, be able to say no, this isn't right. This isn't

so good. So good. Good question. No, probably I mean, again, Then a lot of different answers to that. But one answer that comes to mind now is that if you don't have any self image to defend, it's a matter you, anybody I see myself, it's a lot easier to respond that way, when I'm trying to live up to some kind of image of who was supposed to be and tried to send it or something, then it's harder to kind of know they get caught more easily. So again, you know, in my, in my experience, my life has been training to see very clearly the self images of self identities that I've been clutching to holding on to and learning to let go of them. And so as I've talked about sometimes is that I was neurotically attached to be liked. And that caused a lot of trouble for me a lot of suffering. So I would have let go of that over time. So how, how to come to that zero point. I've stayed there. How to Stay is a really trading have to really get to know yourself really well. And it's just you the way you what you brought up was how to respond to the world situation in the world. People like, like Martin Luther King, when they were preparing the civil rights work workers for civil disobedience, they prepared them. It wasn't just like, you know, pluck them up one day and said, hey, let's go down. You know, they did weeks and weeks, you know, months of preparation so they can be ready to, to be that kind of way. And then there were some really, really wonderful examples of people who stood their ground, even when they were being beat up. But you know, they didn't they didn't succumb to hostility. So I'm a great believer in trading. And there's all kinds of great ideals of how to live and the world has so much need a feel of people who can can respond can engage so in order to be able to do that, and I hope that my hope is certainly a Buddhist trading, Buddhist practice doesn't make a whole army of permits. You know, I'm much more interested in

creating an army of people who are engaged in the world in some way, and handout training that way they can do that in wise, generous, loving, non hostile ways.

So this zero point that you mentioned, to see there could be sort of a near enemy to that something it looks like you're at the zero point, but you're not really. And I was wondering if you could say a little bit about what that might look like and how you might tell the difference between the two? A good question. So in Buddhism, there's so you don't know this. There are as a concept of the near end Foreign Enemies have certain virtues certain good qualities that a person could have in near enemies or something that is the opposite is going to be destroys the good quality. But it's so close to it seemingly that camouflage it looks like it people are confused by it. And a foreign enemy is something it's so it's separate and distinct. It's no one's gonna confuse it. But again, it can destroy the good quality. So, for example, the near enemy of loving kindness is sometimes said to be lust. You know, there's a number of enemies but last year you continue to love this person. You know, it's that's not you know, lust is not the same thing as you know, kindness. And the far enemy is, is hate. The near enemy of equanimity is sometimes said to be indifference. And the far enemy of equanimity is, I guess, I don't know what it is. Anybody at the moment, right? Okay, yes. I don't know, man. I don't know. And so then so it was a near enemy of the zero point I suppose. You know, there's can be giving up. Some people give up and think that you know, this, you know, this is it, you know, it's really giving up this kind of kind of unhealthy surrender. I can imagine that some forms of depression can be interpreted spiritually. You know what this is so, you know, zero point i'm not motivated for anything. Yes. Good, good.

Great. Their enemy of the good is the perfect

So

indifference I guess could also be a near enemy of the zero point and going to sleep in a variety of various kind of falling asleep we kind of get can those are spaced out and there are some people that kind of basically are spaced out they think it's Nirvana

You know, I'm not relating to anything and then it's also said that and this is the way I heard it sounds like this repeated apology. Oh, I heard it. But that sleep is the poor man's Nirvana.

Someone else? Yes, it is. It might sound like no but other People do people who have hearing assistive devices and

so

on. Yes. And so you talk about moving towards generosity, say if you're relating with ill will or, or greed, or. But um, my question is and I hope this applies to some other people besides myself that I can sort of materialize selves. And there are certain familiar selves and some of them are seem to be more functional than others. I'm not sure if I should be engaged in this material is I mean, I don't know. In other words,

can you do that? Do you know what I'm talking

about? Let me try to maybe try to suggest something. If you're talking about how it is different Ways of self image are different ways of manifesting yourself in the world that seem almost like different selves in different situations. And some of them are healthy, some are not. And sometimes you adjust them according to where you're at. And should you be involved in this kind of activity at all? That's the

question. I think it's fine. It's normal to have different kind of self manifestation, different situations, it's healthy. And ideas to be fluid not caught by a trick by it. So, you know, it's good for me when I'm home, to manifest self as father. You know, there's certain rules or principles that need to go along with that territory and certain ways to carry myself and be and, and I'm happy to leave it behind when I come down here. You know, but you know, so there I kind of manifest a certain way of being and as my kids change, I manifest differently and I can change who I am in a sense in relationship to them. And when I'm here at IMC, I manifest a little bit more I kind of act in the principle of more than I'm a teacher, and I tried to be myself certainly as a high value, just be myself, but I can't, you know, being myself is something again exists in relationship. And who I am, is also here, this setting is a teacher, and that comes with certain kind of parameters comes a certain kind of cares and concerns that I have to be aware of and have to include. And so sometimes I'm happy to go home and put that down, leave that behind. And so, but you know, so so different situations, you know, we, you know, put up with, you know, we, we participate in different constructs, you know, so, you know, so now if it's exhausting or it feels like it can be exhausting, it can feel like there's a lot of shoulds it can feel confining. It can feel like you know, you're doing in order to please someone you're doing an order to make yourself safe you're doing in order to prove to the world how great you are, then it's you know, self defeating and then it's ugly. Austin, but it can be done for a wise reasons. Like, I hope it's wise, you know, that I, when I'm at home that I'm manifest myself as a father, you know, otherwise, you know, these kids need a father. And my wife needs them to have a father. And, and hopefully it's wise that hopefully the way I manifest myself here as a teacher, hopefully that's works for people. Hopefully that's helpful, you know, connected stop. You know, make sense, this is how this is helpful at all, because it's an important question you're asking, so I want to make sure that

Yeah, I guess what I want to mainly asking is, if there's one self that's better at generosity, is it worth investing? It takes a little bit of sort of awareness to stay in that self rather than moving into

is a little bit hard to know what you mean by the self. You're talking about how However, the generic the generic answer that I like to give is I don't have any answers for you, you find out for yourself by trial and error. And so you try it out. And you see what has beneficial for you what supports you. So you try out the gender itself for a week, and then see does that actually make your life more peaceful, more subtle and more helpful. And if it does, then that's maybe a route you want to follow for a while. But maybe after five months, it's enough that when you've done it enough, so you know, you become your own teacher that way. So thank you all and so enjoy your relating