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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So, a couple of months ago, I had in mind to do a series of talks, starting today and Monday evenings on some of the basic elements of Buddhist ethics. And today I was thinking what was I thinking about? But somewhere I said that would do it starting today.

So in a very general way of speaking, there are two aspects of Buddhism. And one I love the way that it was described by I think I heard indirectly read about it in the right of Gary Snyder, who studied zen, in Japan in the early 60s. And he came back and said he learned Japan. In zen, there are two things. There's meditation. And then there's sweeping the temple. And but the temple doesn't stop at the temple gates, basically the whole world, your temple. So there's meditating, which represents a whole domain of Buddhism is and then there's the part of being of service or acting in the world of working in the world. And interesting, in early Buddhism, Nirvana is kind of the goal or the ultimate kind of possibility of what's often represented as meditation. It's characterized by peace. And it's one of the great directions that person has set their life is to bring their life to some. There's no conflict anymore. There's no fighting, there's no war. There's no fear. And there's a profound sense of peace. They want experiences, to be really basic thing, direction to go in your life. So Nirvana is liberation is characterized by peace, but the Dharma is said to be characterized by non violence or non harming himself. And so on one hand we have peace the other hand we have non violence, the Dharma here can be understood to be the path of practice the practices the person engages in, kind of the Buddhism Dharma sometimes word for religion. So the path of practice has a lot to do with non violence. The results of the practice has a lot to do with peace. And I think it's a very interesting kind of dynamic. A lot of people in the West come to Buddhism because of the meditation practice. And a lot of people, a lot of people, maybe some of you even here tonight, will come to Buddhism, not at all interested in Buddhism and are not all interested in the isms of Buddhism. And they have you have that you might have a ism, around non is in a non ism is non ism is your ism. And you're not one of those ism people you're a non ism. Meaning if you don't want to the religious part of it, and so just give me the meditation and which Many people have taken that approach and it's been of great benefit to them. But the but what at the antenna ends ends up looking like that is that Buddhism might be just a meditation, just some introverted kind of approach to living a life. If you go look at the teachings of the Buddha and much of Buddhism, meditation is often considered to be the kind of the cream of the cake, or the pinnacle of a wide range of practices. And that a big percentage of what Buddhism is about Buddhist practices about his relational is has to do with how we relate to the world, how we relate to others, and clarifying and developing and, and, and resolving our relationship to the world. Meditation at least kind of the kind of maybe the most obvious impression Some people get is not about being in relationship. Some people complain that, you know, you sit down to meditate and close your eyes and you shut out everybody else. And it seems, you know, like, where what's that to do with people, some people who are extreme introverts find meditation to be a great solution.

And some people like to escape for life, find meditation to be a great, you know, kind of benefit for them because it's a wonderful word escape. And in fact, sometimes meditation is counter indicated. Or sometimes that people point out just be very careful you don't use meditation as an escape from responsibilities and from, you know, connections. And one of the ways to safeguard that in Buddhism has been that Buddhism meditation practice follows after having taken developed your healthy relationships with the world. In English, we sometimes call this the world of ethics. Developing the ethical side of Buddhism. And you know, sweeping the temple, but the temple doesn't end at the temple gates, caring for the world caring for ourselves. So the Dharma is characterized by non violence. And this has all kinds of different meanings. The most obvious one is that is that people who live the Dharma are going to live the Dharma are living a life that's dedicated to being non violent to not being in conflict and aggressive or hostile kind of conflict with people. And, and to train themselves in that what does it take to develop a healthy relatedness? How do we take care of ourselves in a healthy way, without being in hostile conflict with others, so that it has one aspect. The other aspect is how to live as we don't have a hostile conflict to ourselves. I know can be non violent towards ourselves. For many people, this is really the big difficult area of meditation practice, to sit down and meditate, close our eyes. And lo and behold, it's one's own. It's one's relationship to oneself or relationship to the world that comes to the forefront. And so the unresolved issues will bubble up sooner or later, or meditation practice as you sit and get calmer and calmer in meditation practice. There's a way in which we dropped down into layers and layers of our psyche. And the places that are maybe deeply deep down inside which are unresolved, tend to bubble up and unresolved generally from a lot of people means that there's some kind of conflict there. So, how do we come into that place, whereas unresolved things and relate to it, without conflict relate to it in a non violent way with compassion

So when so the ethical sides of Buddhism, begins with a practice of generosity. And Buddha when he often taught to encourage people to first develop generosity, then he emphasized the other kinds of ethical practices. not killing, not stealing, not lying, no sexual misconduct. ethics, generosity has to do with our relationship with each other, to other people. You can be generous to yourself and most mostly generosity has to do with other people. So the starting point in Buddhism, classically, has not been meditation, but it's been an inter relational practice of generosity. If you practice generosity, you get to bump into people, those people and you get to find out what your relationship is to people. What your relationship is to being in a generous, healthy, open handed open hearted, open minded relationship to others. And that's a very, very rich world in which To understand oneself, how we're afraid of people, how would we be cling to our things, our concepts or ideas of stuff? And so we get to explore how can we find a way to be relating to people in a healthy way. The practices of not killing, not harming, not lying, not involving sexual misconduct. not stealing are also relational practices. And the corollary corollary are those are also relational. The corollary of not harming is to act and live compassionately. The corollary of not stealing in Buddhism is to be generous. The corollary of no sexual misconduct is to be contentment. So like if you're in a committed relationship, to be contented, that committed relationship. The corollary of not lying is to speak now as speak only honest speech, but also speaking Which was, which is kind and beneficial. If a person takes on these best practices, looking at their speech, looking at their behavior, it is going to be a way in which we're gonna learn a lot about ourselves in that process. And we're going to have to kind of wrestle with are some people are gonna have to wrestle with themselves about what's most important for them their values, and how they see themselves relationship to others, how they see others in relationship to themselves. And there's a whole big area of development, personal development that goes into looking at these ethical aspects. So the classic way that meditation practices taught in Asia in Buddhism is you start with this, these ethical aspects. And once those are a little bit established, then at some point, you might introduce meditation. Here in the West, there's a strong tendency to do it upside down. Many people will come to

meditation first. And then after sometime and doing meditation, it does on them. You know, there's some connection here, between the level of integrity or peace or well being that I get in meditation, and how I live my daily life. And it doesn't make sense to only have this piece. When I meditate, it makes sense to kind of start exploring how what goes on in my day to day life, how to bring this into my world, in my relationships. And so you find that many people that after some years or months or whatever, doing meditation practice, they get interested in that world of relationships and how do we do it and develop good relationships there.

One of the reasons why this is very important, is that meditation practice because it kind of drops down or opens up the mind in a very full way. In a stillness or quiet At the deep meditation, we encounter, some people can encounter their neurosis encounter the places where there, they, as I said earlier unresolved issues, place it with places in which maybe people are not fully psychologically developed. Maybe everyone's not fully developed everywhere. But, but there are ways in which people don't get psychologically developed for fully. And so it can be very frightening and very difficult to go into the world of meditation. Unless there's a very strong in psychological, Western psychological language. There's a strong ego development that's been created. People have don't have a strong ego, ego development, ego structure. meditation practice can be quite difficult at times because meditation practice there's so much calm, that if there's not a strong ego structure to hold that some of the more you unusual psychological things could start happening. The person can regress, for example, start feeling and acting and thinking like a four year old. So, practicing ethics, generosity and precepts. It's also a way of developing equals in modern psychology is called ego structure. Buddhism doesn't have language ego structure, but it talks about a lot about developing various good qualities that have that psychological qualities. So, one of the classic ones in Buddhism is called Param. Ease parameters of perfections. Developing generosity, developing ethics, developing patience, developing wisdom, developing truthfulness, developing loving kindness, developing compassion, equanimity Oh interesting one is developing. But what may be in western terms will be called will and Buddhism is called resolve, developing a strong sense of worry But resolve. And so you develop these qualities. And as these qualities become stronger, then it's easier to let go more fully. Because there's an inner psychological structure that will hold very deep letting go. And deep learning goal is needed. If we want to be able to touch the piece that is a part one of our potentials is very deep sense of peace requires that we'd like go to places where we're in conflict where we're holding or resisting. And so there's a wonderful then kind of inter relatedness between these two spheres, the sphere of the world, and the sphere of meditation, the sphere of meditation and sweeping the world of the Dharma and the world of Nirvana. And so they support each other back and forth. So the characteristic of the Dharma is non Violence and that becomes one of the guiding principles in Buddhism for how a Buddhist will live their life or find their life or find find their practice, what is a non violent thing here was a non harming thing. in this situation here. The non harming thing is meant to be the flip side of that explicitly stated is that which is compassionate, how do we abide with compassionate concern, compassionate regard for the world around us? So, that's what I wanted to say tonight. And what I'd like to do now is to hear from you, without introduction to Buddhist ethics, what kind of concerns or questions or comments you'd like to make around this topic The world of our relationships, the world of how we are living in the world. And that also will maybe give me some sense of what direction to go over the next couple of weeks as I continue talking about Buddhist ethics. So if you can take the mic, that would be helpful. In the passage it back there. Chairs isn't on? Nope. You might have to push the button.

Or you were talking about generosity.

I'm dealing with that myself in this age that we're going through right now or this economic downslide that we're going through right now. The idea of donations. How do you Donate, which you may not have. Because for some people they can't get a job.

Or all the ramifications of what we're going through right now. Yeah.

So then how do you donate?

You start with your smile. There you go.

I

donate a lot of money to Allison's in Africa. Great. Yes.

But I've had to rethink that.

So if you if I think that part of generosity is hopefully to have the wisdom to know what's appropriate to give, how much to give, were to give. And so if you you don't want to give probably you don't want to give so much that it starts hurting you. And so, if you're in financial, financial difficulty or finances have gotten poorer than they were before Then imagine you have to make an adjustment and figure out and donate less to something. And maybe that's unfortunate in many ways, but maybe it's realistic.

But then there's the idea

with that comes within myself that I enjoy the idea that comes within myself.

I missed I missed a word, the idea

although I mean selfish or selfish yeah and and

only caring about myself

the but again, you know I started off you know, you could start with a smile. There are many ways of extending your life beyond yourself so you know, selfish that doesn't require a lot of money. And so there are probably people right on your street where you live who need help or you know, there's there's things you can do very locally. It doesn't require much money requires your if you have the time or maybe doesn't even require much time, but maybe it requires a certain way, way of being with the people you do spend time with. That you get boring. interested in them, you offer them your, your, your ear and just listen more carefully. So I would, I would I would explore ways that you can be generous without being with money. So back in the corner there you could pass it back all the way to the corner.

When you when you spoke about the ego structure being able to hold the main container essentially for the ethical development. I'm, I have difficulty in understanding the difference between that and the egocentricity as a separate from self. Could you speak a little bit more about

the difference between being selfish, egocentric and developing a strong ego structure

More around the

practice of noticing the difference of

eye from egocentricity or that sense of separateness from everything versus the oneness and then the ego structure.

So, so here we restate the question is, what is being being being egotistical or narcissistic? You focus so much on oneself versus versus ego structure. Because if you succeed like developing a strong ego structure, using that language might reinforce being egotistical and keeping oneself kind of narcissistically separate from others. Something like that, right? Yes, yes, it's a certainly a good one to be concerned about. Some of it, I think has to do with the confusion around words. And even the word ego is a confusing word because different It has different meanings by different Speakers in English. I think the original idea coming out of Freud had to do with not being egocentric or narcissistic, but had to do with inner psychological strengths that helped bring balance to different forces within us so we can live a healthier life. And then but in, in Buddhist English, in most forms of British English, the word ego is considered really bad. And so then it becomes very confusing for because my therapist is talking about developing ego and my Buddhist teachers telling me to destroy the ego. You know, they should talk. The but I think that's why I tried to use the word ego structure, you know, is to qualify it. I could easily drop the word structure and talk about having a developing enough psychological strength so that we can be really honest Straight up being honest is a form of strength, truth telling. So that we can have inner stability so we can be present for what's going on and use the word oneness. If we don't have some inner strength, when we become one, in a sense that then we might actually merge too much with the other person or with a, and lose ourselves in the process in an unhealthy way. So developing strong mindfulness, we know what's going on, but we're feeling and thinking and what's going on is very important and being connected in a healthy way with others. So Buddhism doesn't use the classical he doesn't use the word ego, but it does use the idea of developing these mental factors as mental qualities that in modern psychological terms can be called the ego structure. The way Buddhism also adds to this is that through the mindfulness practice, is the careful attention to suffering and to clinging. And now narcissism involves a contraction of all suffering was clinging. And so as we're following as we're developing ourselves, hopefully in Buddhism, Buddhist practice, we're noticing the ways in which we're limiting. We're self limiting. We're restricting ourselves through being egotistical and feel the suffering of that. And so hopefully we'll learn to free ourselves with that as well. says it's a satisfying answer to you. Yes, it is. So next year here, there's someone else.

So if I understand correctly, it sounds like generosity and ethics are sort of pathways to help strengthen ego structure. And then perhaps meditation is a more of a pathway towards one could say maybe dissolving the ego structure or resolving deeper energies. In the psyche or in the ego structure, but I'm wondering in sort of modern Western times, if perhaps other pathways are needed for some of us to develop the strengthen that the ego structure in order to even get to being able to be generous and practice the

ethics.

Maybe it could be. So what occurs to me is to think of kindness developmental model for human growth, during, you know, as a baby in childhood and up. And what some psychologists will point out is that is that for some individuals that development developmental stages of growth, get interrupted or get truncated or get that get don't get completed as people are growing up through childhood and then you become an adult with In complete stage, and so sometimes you might be right, that person has to go back and somehow deal with these undeveloped areas of their life that. So for example, an

important aspect of early childhood is to learn to have a certain kind of healthy separation from others, boundaries between self and others and symptoms, having healthy trust in others as well. And if there's not, if a young child doesn't have trusting relationship with their parents, or has doesn't find a way to have healthy sense of separation from their parents and whatever, then it can be quite difficult as an adult. And so how do you find that how you develop that is certainly an issue for psychotherapy, classically in the society here, so maybe you're right, that other things are needed. But I would suggest that generosity is a very simple practice. And, and ethics is not maybe as simple but it's kind of clear whether you're beating someone with your fists or not, you know or is. And so as we as, as a person explores generosity, world generosity, I think that was one of the places to begin, maybe, maybe not 100%. But it's one of the ways of beginning to work on some of these developmental issues that might be left over from childhood. Some make some sense. And I knew someone who came back from long retreats in Asia. And she had a number of psychological problems. She had obsessive compulsive disorder, and a variety of other things, so that it was really almost impossible for her to meditate. She was really anymore She meditated that quite a bit. And just gone because of her issues, just meditation was probably the wrong thing for her to do. And it just made everything worse. And she came back and she couldn't really meditate anymore. But she still was really into Buddhism. So she went to her Buddhist teacher and what do I do? And he said, You practice generosity. And that's what you did. And that gave her stability and grounded her, brought her back into her body back into the world of relatedness. And it wasn't a cure for her, but it kind of was really important stepping stone to that healing that she had to go through.

Can I ask you what, in what forms she practice generosity, what it

looked like for her, it was really ordinary things. She worked in a kitchen she cooked for people. She went out of her way to help people who weren't to be you know, needed some kind of errand or something. Pretty basic simple things. Thank you. Yeah.

I have a question about motivation and

ethics.

Is it ever okay to

you know, kill or steel or something like that? If it seems to be you know, I don't know, I saw this movie that was deeply disturbing to me. And I got confused because at first, I was really taken aback by the characters. What I thought was extraordinary generosity. And they apparently they started all this because they were work addicts and they couldn't stop working and then they they were looking at their Palm Pilot while they were driving and the car got into an accident and seven people were killed, including a person And I think he was to marry. And so he apparently couldn't live with him with that. And the only way he felt he could make amends for what he did was he took his brother's badge and he tried for the IRS and he tried to change other people's lives and give them grace, you know, Grace periods and this and that. And so he took that without asking, and then he was like, generously helping people. And, and then at the end, he, he committed suicide. He because this woman, he fell in love with pedal heart, permanent heart defect, and nobody could save her. And so I guess he felt bad or he couldn't live with that, that he took his fiance's life to this accident. And he took his own life and was he was an he was a living organ donor and he donated parts of his body and to people that were suffering and he took his own life and cheap. This woman, unbeknownst to her, got his heart. And at first I thought this was unbelievable. This was such an extraordinary act of generosity. And then later, I realized, well, it's probably a violation of all kinds of ethics, like suicide stealing, and, and maybe he was

motivated by guilt. And so I was really confused. And yeah, I wonder how many people, millions of people go around, giving a variety of things, maybe out of some subconscious, unbeknownst to them.

guilt.

Great. The that's one of the reasons why generosity is a great practice. As a practice, we don't just do it blindly. But we do it looking at what's going on. We look at our motivations, look at our feelings and what's going on for us. And that kind of that study of ourselves. We Cuz often generosity does have can have a lot of mixed motivations behind it. And just to give forgiving sake, without any kind of care given to studying or being aware of why why we're giving, I don't think we're going to develop as much as if we really study what's going on there. And it's a great practice. It's also it's great to practice giving when you don't feel like it. Because that's also a place where you can then study yourself and find out what's going on. Yes, a lot of mixed mixed things going on there.

The kind of, like, ethics issue that I'm curious about is that it seems like the action is is fairly easy. That's like, you know, I mean, you slip up once in a while, but it seems like you know, it's it's not so hard to do the action but like, I'm shocked at when a lot of times, I will just Looking at someone, and I'll catch myself sort of attacking them in a pre verbal moment, so that I can grow, I can have power in the relationship or I will do something to sort of be you know, sort of seductive or charming to them or and it's kind of disturbing to see how like I almost like like, like I have these impulses like I'm at a gambling table and I'm trying to get all the chips or you know, get the get the good cars and stuff and so

it doesn't turn into action, but I'm like, yeah, just seeing it sometimes is a little disturbing.

So the question is how to be ethical the gambling tables?

No, like, not like kind of If you notice yourself operating like you're operating in life like you're you're in a gambling

bank yeah so what he's trying to try to manipulate and control and get the best from it is he pre verbal minutes very quick the motivations knowing that well there's there's a variety of things. One is just you it looks like you've looked at it some you look at it more understand it more share that information with some of your friends like you're doing here and so becomes much more conscious and highlighted for you so you're so you're become more more conscious of that whole phenomena. And then once you become more more conscious of how it is and have studied for a while, then you might consider what some options you have for addressing it more directly. So if it's gambling is connected to you might choose not to gamble, but that was just the example you gave the other times in life.

clarify that I actually not been trying to defend myself that I've never gambled

Like gambling, yeah. So the

so

so then you look at it and then you decide, you know what would be helpful to do here in some situations you say, maybe I need to prepare myself before I go into some certain kind of relationships, maybe I need to meditate, go for a walk, take a few deep breaths, kind of check in with myself before I'm going to have that phone call before I'm going to meet that person. So we prepare ourselves. And one of the one of the reasons for meditation is to prepare yourself so you can go into the world in a

calmer way and see more clearly what's going on. So you prepared and isn't just calm. And one of the great one of the really important roles of meditation is, is people associated with more peaceful and being more calm, but it might actually be more important or equally important, that meditation hopefully will give your person a sense of well being As there's a sense of well being within, then we're not going to be we're less likely to look for our well being in controlling and manipulating the world around us. So rather than getting our will, so if you don't, if a person doesn't have any, any any inner well being, then they'll go gambling, or they'll do you know, something strange in the world to try to get it. But if you already have it, then it's easier. So. So prepare oneself for those situation might be helpful. And other is to, is to is to make sure you don't keep it private. Sharing the issues that you're grappling with, with other people, will you say it to other people, this is what I'm grappling with. Oh, I did it again. You know, it's not exactly like confession, but something like that. confession is a loaded word. But but there's a way of If you if you if you share with someone else, your behavior what you've done, it takes some of the power and identification away from it. And it might help you kind of loosen up, loosen up. And so that's another approach occurs to me here

during the back, test the mic back

I guess for me, they, I find myself struggling with, like resolve and will and how to do that in a compassionate way. Hmm.

So how does that how's How does it happen in what was the key to learn more about how

I mean, how to, you know, practice resolve or will without negative self talk, you know, like, Oh, you know, you said you were, you know, talking to myself. Oh, I was said I was going To do this or I was going to do this in a particular way because I've resolved to, you know, do something differently and then I don't meet that expectation and then get involved in a process of self negatives talking. Which isn't compassionate. Yeah. myself at least

the yeah there's you know, it's a there's a it's just astounding how many people have a lot of strong self critic, ready to criticize themselves and it's very painful. This way people could be critical of themselves hypercritical the judgmental, feel some ways unworthy or inadequate or bad or something. Some people find it very helpful to spend a period of time cultivating loving kindness and compassion. So don't not leave loving kindness or forgiveness or compassion to chance and try to call on it when we're struggling, but actually make it as regular practice to in Buddhism offers a variety of practices to do to cultivate loving kindness becomes more easily accessible becomes like a habit almost it's available. So we can recondition the mind little bit. So the mind is more, we're more inclined towards having forgiveness, having compassion, having free having loving kindness. And some people find it very helpful to spend a few months in the primary meditation practice would be loving kindness meditation, and that can begins for some people softening the places of hate or self criticism or judgment and all that. And the other approach is, would be more mindfulness approach is to look more deeply at the nature of what's going on when we're being self critical. And there's an interesting phenomena that People who find themselves struggling with judgments, either judging themselves negatively or judging others in some negative way, that it's a painful phenomenon. And it's possible then to, you know, so you know, you, you didn't follow on your resolve. And so you criticize yourself for being a lousy resolver. And then you criticize yourself for being critical of yourself. And then you know, and then it goes on from there, you know, and the, but if you look, but if you look carefully at that it's, some people find it very interesting to ask themselves the question, What benefit Are you trying to get by being judgmental? What benefit Are you trying to get? So kind of assumed give it give it a benefit of doubt that maybe there's some kind of attempt to do something healthy there. And what is it the healthy thing you're trying

to do but being judgmental, and that and taking a different angle? On it might kind of open the door to see it in some new way. And some people have found that, that the motivation between being judgmental is to try to make themselves safe. And so they're making them so they won't, they won't be safe. And by judgment, judging other people, if I, if they're really wrong, if they're bad, that I must be okay. And the effort is not so much about judging them, but it creates a sense of safety here for me. And so there might be something healthy, buried deep inside of your self criticism. And maybe it's self respect. And maybe if you find this, some some maybe you can find behind the self criticism, some healthy sense of self respect. Oh, I let myself down here. I'm trying to find a way to find my sense a strong sense of self respect, and I've disappointed myself and now I'm trying to be critical I'm trying to attack something that's interfering with my self respect. But it's it's a dysfunctional way of doing it. So if you can, so sometimes you can, if you go back far enough in the mind to the, to the what builds up to criticism or judgments, you can sometimes find something more healthy a healthier approach to it. And then in Buddhism what we encourage is, is when we've done something that we may say, casually say wrong. You know, we've done something we don't feel so good about. Buddhism encourages us not to feel guilty. Guilt is considered to be an unnecessary emotion in Buddhism. Buddhism does not encourage guilt, in fact, discourages it. But, but you aren't, you are encouraged to pay attention to notice how you've let yourself down how you've done something maybe a little bit off no Is it enough take it in enough so that you can then be forward looking? How can I do better next time? So people are in guilt or just tend to be only backward looking. In Buddhism, we look just we look backward, just enough in time to try to learn and then we focus primarily How can I do better next time? I kind of learn from this I don't do this again.

So I could go on and on but so give you some ideas. Something to something to work with and Okay. Well, it's nine o'clock. So the intention is to spend a few a couple of weeks here on some kind of issues around ethics. And, and so has a lot to do with how we are in the world and what Buddhism says about how we are in the world. More than what Buddhism has to say about how we are in meditation. And hopefully that we can explore this together and find it useful as a group to discuss this. So now you can go out and sweep the world.