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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsda

Meditation group used to meet Sunday mornings in Portola Valley, at the community center there many years ago. And we were there. I came up with an analogy. I want to share that analogy with you. It's a, it's an imperfect analogy. But it grew out of the situation we were in then. The community hall had a lonely, very big auditorium and has a linoleum floor that we would sit on Sunday mornings, and occasionally would come in Sunday morning, after they've been a party in the in the auditorium the night before, and they haven't cleaned up. And so there would be bears be spilled on the floor. It feels sticky to be walking across and there's sticky socks. It'd be a lot of dirt and dust and stuff. And so analogy is imagine that for 500 or 1000 years, they didn't clean that floor. And so slowly, over the decades and centuries, that gunk builds up, builds up and you have to while it's maybe two or three or four feet thick, all the dust and the beer and it's got people walking on it, so it gets really solid like cement. And after a few centuries, people have forgotten that there was this linoleum floor at the bottom. And then one day, someone went into the archives, and they found reference to linoleum floor. And, and the person would come out of the archives. Oh, there's a long floor down there. And everyone would say No way. We know just this floor there. You know, it's four feet above the ground. You know It's a we have the steps we've kind of made to go up into it. You know, it's a solid marble like stuff. There's no linoleum down there.

So the first thing kind of is maybe a little bit foolhardy or insistent or really wants to know the truth really strongly or somebody who's really motivated, gets hammer and chisel gets. JACK saw no jackhammer. And eventually out of long work, maybe years of hard work gets through that marble like hard steel, gunk, beer and everything, vomits and finally gets down and unable to clear out one square foot of the linoleum floor. shaft going down and then the person Wow, it's true. The archives are right. There is a linoleum floor down here. And now all I've managed to do is clear one square foot of it. Now I know in theory, if I have long enough where we have enough work and do enough work, we could clear out all the gunk and have a complete linoleum floor again. So that's an analogy for the experience of awakening that enlightenment can take a lot of work. For some people, sometimes it's very, very easy for some people, some people it takes a lot of effort. But it's the first experience of awakening is often like having at one square foot to the floor cleared and from that person can know Oh, now I know there's a floor now I know there's this thing called awakening and now I know what the work is. There's actually a lot more work to be done than death, getting out one square foot. There's like 300 square feet of panels. And you know, so it's 300 times as much work. Now some people just get content with their one square foot thing, but that was good. And then they have this in, you know, enlightened retirement. But the idea is the idea is to see the floor, and then to see Oh, look, at least in theory, it's possible to clear more of I can do more work, it's a lot more work to be done. And then the work then practice is based on that understanding that knowledge, one has itself the experience of persons have to then begin actualizing fulfilling or expanding out that awakening into more and more areas of one's life.

Maybe the analogy doesn't work so well because it's something that was not a very pretty linoleum floor there in Portola Valley. But so it is the and a Buddha represents, you know, I don't know, you know, I don't know who the Buddha was, I never met him. And we have these books that tell us something about who he is. And we have a lot of idealization of the Buddha. That's what you know, most Buddhists do, they idealize the Buddha. And but, you know, you know, it was he was he partly a myth probably was a real person, most likely, but how enlightened was he? He had he managed to clear out all the gunk. So the whole floor was clear. would like to believe that. But you know, I have no basis to really know for sure. But what the Buddha is, for me more than a historical person is represents the possibility the capacity that we all have of clearing out all the floor, cleaning up the whole terrain. And it's a worthwhile endeavor to worthwhile goal for anybody's life to do that work. And so having this image is symbolic image of the possibility of doing completely is inspiring, at least to me. I don't know whether I can do it in my lifetime, the whole thing. But that doesn't really matter so much to me, as it does that I'm on the path to do that. If that's the direction I'm working on. So gunk over linoleum floor maybe doesn't sound very good. Firing. But there could be all kinds of other analogies. Maybe another one maybe which also maybe doesn't work too well, but maybe a little bit more inspiring is that of a muddy pond. And so the pond is really muddy. And so they say, you know, if you leave the mud muddy pond alone, the muddle settle and you have a clear pond. So maybe that's true, then maybe this particular muddy pond will take a few take a long time to clear that way. But maybe you can take you know a pipe or you take a bucket top to the feet of water out of the pond and let the mud in the in the bucket settle until you have clear water in the bucket. And then you know, it's possible to have that clarity. And now it's a matter of, you know, doing it for the whole pond. So it's possible to have in a very small way, very significant way, maybe very deep way. Have an experience of awakening. Freedom, of peace, of putting down the burden of seeing through the illusions that many of us can live in, and also see it very clearly very genuinely. And then that clarity and that freedom and that peace then becomes a reference point for how a person wants to live the rest of their life. So in Buddhism, we say that there's a big difference that the practice of person does. mindfulness of concentration of compassion, of loving kindness, letting go, the practices that the Buddhists do, are considered to be the same before awakening and after awakening. So it looks the same. So it's not like well, I got my first experience of the linoleum and now I can, you know, do something, do something different. You get to do exactly the same. But the difference is that you have a different you have a reference point where you know, for yourself, oh, this is true. Know It, it's like in your bones then it's in your marrow. And so you really know, oh, this level of peace of freedom of awakening is really you know, it's experienced and experienced. It's like, if you've never knew how to swim, you live in a desert far from any kind of water. And someone said, Oh, human beings can float and swim in water. No, no, no, people can't do that. I can't even imagine there's so much water I like you know. And then then, finally, this person goes to the ocean and someone teaches a person to swim. And, Wow, now I know I can swim. And you really know it. So in Buddhism, they said there's a big there's a there's a, a.

There's a point where some experience some deep experience with some significant experience becomes a reference point for how one guy's one's life oriented one's life directs one's life and That when awakening is that guide, the awakening shows us what's possible in a way that we can't even imagine sometimes without that awakening. So for example, it's possible to be tense, and not knowing how it's possible, you know, and as possible, the industry tends to know it. But many people, most people carry levels of tension in their body. And in their minds, that is taken to be just ordinary, this is not the way it's supposed to be. And then they have some kind of do something, it could be a variety of things, that allows that tension to settle. Maybe they have a long vacation, maybe they go on a long retreat, maybe, you know, whatever. And, and then, wow, I had no idea that I was carrying so much tension. Or I had no idea that I was carrying so much Priyanka patient. So one of the waking ups that

meditators do, some of them, some of you is sit down to try to be still with your mind. And the mind doesn't cooperate. And the mind sometimes can be out of control, and has, you know, has a mind of its own is wondering this way in that and, and people new to meditation will say, wow, I had no idea that my mind was so active and so busy and so caught up in so many different things. before seeing that before having some kind of reference point to see that, that's ordinary. So, as people so then, if you get some deep relaxation or some deep stillness in the mind, you have a different reference point from which to understand your life or life. And then the busy agitated mind is no longer seen as being a natural thing, this is the way things are going to always has to be. The tensions we carry in our body are seeing, it doesn't have to be this way. There's other ways as well. And then the issue becomes interesting to ask, is this is a significant enough to warrant a new way of living a life is difficult enough that it becomes motivating to practice. This discipline of spiritual discipline is motivating and I've tried to do something to have this different quality of life that's possible. And so what does it take for it to be motivating? Some people it just so obvious because the alternative involves so much suffering, that life as it usually lives is so much suffering, so uncomfortable. But it just does not tenable to continue this way. So there has to be some practice some way of addressing it. For other people, they see the effect life as normal has on other people. You know, I'm always so greedy I'm always so angry, I'm lashing out at people all the time. And that's where I kind to people, and so not so much for their own sake but in order to be a better influence a better citizen, better helpful for other people, people that are motivated to do this inner work to clear out the gunk clear out the floor open as to clear out the pond to create the clarity. Some people are motivated because, along implore they saw that one square foot is so beautiful, the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. It wouldn't have been the one in Portola Valley. And that beauty is Just so, you know, it's like you see some people, some people are oriented towards the light moving towards the light and some people are oriented away from the darkness. So both are fine, just different. I don't know why people are different. Some people see the floor and that's enough for them. Some people see the gunk and that's enough for them to motivate them. So

So another thing about this awakening it kind of points to two highlights two areas of our life. And one is in Buddhist terms, they would say one is has to do with our affect our emotional life for our motivational life and the other has to do with Our cognitive life, ideas we live by. And awakening affects both, but in different ways. And it also different times and do so, in terms of our aspect, that clinging external experience of awakening is an experience of the release from clinging, some very profound release of being held holding tight to something clinging to something grasping, or the opposite of Buddhism to consider the same, the same variety of pushing things resisting. And so with awakening, there's this letting go. But in that letting go. There's also sometimes a clear clear understanding of what it is we're letting go of. So the ideas we have what we're holding on to, so there's letting go and then there's the ideas We change our understanding of what it is we're holding on to. So this last few days, I went with my son, my six year old son to science museum and had this wonderful exhibit was a big box, but three feet by three feet cube box. And it had a little hole in the front that was maybe four inch square hole, certainly big enough to put your hand into the box through the hole. And then you could see an image through the box, a three dimensional image. And this particular image was a spring coil that was maybe about, I don't know, three inches tall. And it was just kind of sitting there hovering there inside the box. And the instructions was to put your hand at it and grab it. So you've put your hand in the box to grab is if the close is obvious where it was, and, you know, I had coordination is, you know, was quite good. And, you know, I put my hand in there and just nothing there. I put my hand up and look again, it's sure enough, it's the coil is there, my hand It looked again. And so what it was was, there was a, there was a real coil, but it wasn't where it appeared to be. It was just below the lip of that opening, so you couldn't see it just below. And the opposite wall of the box was a large concave mirror. And so somehow with how light reflects off a concave mirror, it reflected reflected back it so picked up the image mirror, pick up the image of the coil, and reflected it back slightly above where it actually was, because of the mirror

was curved, somehow gave the appearance that the coil was kind of hovering there in midair. So you can go and try to grab it, right? It's three dimensional thing, quite something. So how many of our ideas how many of things that we grab onto are like that.

You know, it's one thing to grab onto a bell, something physical, some physical phenomena. You know, and but most people don't suffer because of what they grab on physically. Even if I'm holding it, even if I'm attached to this bell. It's not the bell that I'm attached to. It's probably the ideas of what the bell means and the significance of the bell for me.

So, in many spiritual circles, they talk about awakening as being clearing away the veils of illusion. So we no longer see because see things more clearly we no longer mystified are no longer enchanted by things that hold us in their spell. So for a while That coil helped me and it's still, I was gonna get it. That's right. What's going on here until I read the description. And so, I'm so one of the illusions that we cling to, has a lot to do with who we think we are as a subject as who we are as a person. And so they can conduct very simple forms. Like we had, like I used to have the illusion that it was really important that people like me, and I had to be a likeable person. And I would do this social gymnastics to try to get people to like me, it was really exhausting. And probably didn't work very well either. And I was operating under illusion illusion that I had to be a certain kind of person and I had to maintain a certain kind of beingness in order to be successful, there be something. And that was just an illusion. It was very motivating. It's a lot of strong emotions around it a lot of strong feelings about it. And in fact, sometimes there were people who participated with me in that illusion. And because people were participating in it, it felt it must be real. And so it was hard for me it was a period of my life, it was hard to let go of some of my self attachment and self image that I had. Because not be because I was get other people expected me to maintain that image to be that way. And as I was trying to let go of it, they kinda didn't want me to do they allow me to. And that was kind of hard to kind of change when people wanted me to be the old way. So sometimes there's a seeing through Oh, just ideas on these ideas, swimming and ideas, social ideas, familial ideas, all these ideas about who we're supposed to be when are supposed to get who we are in relationship to each other. All these ideas Those ideas are ideas that have no more reality than that coil, the image of the coil, the reflection of the coil, there's nothing nothing inconsequential. They are consequential because people live their lives by and make decisions by it. But to wake up to its illusory nature, dreamlike nature is part of what it is to wake up to be awake to clear out the linoleum floor. And so that's one part is the cognitive part. But the also the aspect how it is the effect is also important. Because if I cling, if I spend the whole day in the museum, trying to cling kind of grass that coil over and over hour after hour or hour, even if the end of the day I finally realize it's not graspable. It's just an illusion. It's a reflection there and I leave cognitively, cognitively, I have woken up with my poor hands exhausted. And not only is exhausted, but I might have actually built up a habit in my hand of grasping and leaving the museum. And so the after effect of all that grasping lingers and lingers in terms of the tension, the exhaustion that was there, perhaps it also lingers in terms of maybe something has the kinks have been worked out, you know, maybe I've kind of really gotten tight and stiff from all that grasping trying to grasp. So I had to spend the next week you know, kind of massaging my fingers and hands and really kind of working out the kinks and also my hands on very strong so I've really used those muscles a lot to be really tired. And I can't hardly use it for a while the next few days. And so, there's a variety of certain also there might be the habit is there so, you know, I think I already said that, but I think you know, just keep quiet so the various effects of having grasped for all that time, I have to still live with, even though I've seen that when I was grasping it was an illusion. It makes sense. This is a very important distinction, right? Important point. So we, in Buddhist Buddhist terminology, sometimes they'll say that when you're have some degree of awakening, you still have to bear your karma. There's still a momentum, you set emotional momentum

in your life. And momentum has to kind of still, you still have to work to work it out. So play it out, play it out, let it work at work itself out and resolve it, deal with it, do something with it.

So it's one thing to finally let go of the coil, the illusion and really see what's possible not to grasp. I didn't realize what's possible not to grasp it. Until I saw it wasn't even there. Wow, this is really significant. And now the work is to learn that I can trust, keeping my hand open. And that might take a lot longer to really trust that there might be a lot of reasons why I feel like I kept have to keep grasping at things. So before and after awakening, the practice, as far as I know, is the same. And so it doesn't really matter too much, if you have some experience of awakening or not. What matters from Buddhist point of view, what matters is us keep doing the practice. You are where you are and your practice and you do what you do, keep practicing showing up. Look carefully, learn to let go in a wise way. And then what happens happens, what needs to happen will happen. And it's I think, one of the really beautiful things to deal with a human life profound and no Couple things to clarify these, these matters of the heart and the mind. Clarify and all the ways in the cognitive ways. There's one understanding would clarify also in terms of all the stuff and momentum and habits that they're clear it all out so that the heart is pure and beautiful. And the heart is your heart becomes a heart that safe to hold other people in it so that your heart is safe place so that your heart can become as big as the world. And the whole world can be held in your heart, and the whole robot will feel safe in that heart of yours. Isn't that a great thing? I think it is.

So we have 15 minutes. And now, I welcome you to ask any questions or make comments or protest.

So yes, please.

I had just a, that your story of linoleum floor reminded me of an article I read, I can't remember I think probably Smithsonian, I can't read what town it was it had sort of like a tricky like image but one of these areas of the world where they've been living in the exact same town for hundreds of years, and they got it into their mind that they were going to clear down the surface of the road in these little tiny narrow lanes, and they went down like four or five feet. So it actually does happen. But the karma effect of of this, what you're talking about, is over the centuries, the people in the houses had moved their doors up.

And so now they had to then build steps to go down to the road.

That was awesome.

So all of us are doing much more work than we need to. We also have these steps that they're up and Down, up and down. And if you're awake, you just level around

someone else.

And he's you said that

your your

personal experience was that you realized that you weren't. You were. were being, I guess authentic. So in your social situations, I was just wondering how you came to that realization?

Oh, in many ways, I had something I had to rediscover or discover in different ways repeatedly. Sometimes I saw myself playing social games, where I tried to present myself in a certain way that I wasn't really in order to get make an impression on people. So that wasn't very authentic. Sometimes I was trying to fulfill other people's ideals of what, who I should be rather than some inner understanding of what I should be like my parents or you know, sometimes my Buddhist teachers even are supposed to be a good Buddhist. And sometimes in my lack of an authenticity has to do with hiding. I didn't want people to know who I was, I was afraid or felt like I should be. I should. And so I kind of did a variety of things to kind of, then I got a lie but but you know, not not be exposed, not not revealed. And it was great when I was relatively new to all this, I would go visit the San Francisco Zen Center and sometimes hang out with some of the more experienced longtime practitioners there. And the experience I loved because it was the first time that a group of people who, when I would do my social games, he wouldn't respond. And I felt like it was his mirror and I got to see myself I see what I was doing with such clarity. It was painful. But I thought this is really important. This is really I'm blessed to have this opportunity. So it was one of the decisions I'm one of the reasons I decided to go live at Zen center was because I want to be around people who wouldn't allow me to get away with these things the way my friends would. And then, and then after about a couple of years are there a year a year there remember, maybe more than that, I could have happened a few different times. But I remember there was a time when I could see that what was needed was with me to let go of a certain self image, self representation self concept that I had, when I was trying to prove myself to be and that I was really afraid to do that. And I could feel the fear and I kinda know what I have to do, but I'm not going to do it. And so it took a while sometimes to go through it and one of the Last time I remember going through that kind of cycle was I knew I had to let go of something, I'd let go of something. And so it was, I think was the second time that I went to practice in Asia. I was saying, I need I need a ritual to help me get over that hump. And so I said, Okay, crossing the international dateline in the Pacific, there'll be my ritual, new life, let it all go behind me. So I don't know if that answered your question well enough. That's what come out came out of me. You want to ask again? Why is it important for you? What is it what it says me why it's important question for you?

Well, I mean, I guess, you know, I'm just beginning in my practice, and

yeah, so I'm just,

you know, trying to

realize, I guess otherwise, which I'm not,

you know, authentic or, and so it just sort of struck a bell for me.

And in that sense,

one of the great is many ways of learning about these things. But one of the great ways I think is makes it safer and more comfortable, maybe, is, if a lot of this stuff can be revealed, as in meditation, as we get more more relaxed, and to be relaxed and settled and feel more peaceful that because often that would be non authentic means we're not peaceful, somehow the mind is active and involved. And so as the mind gets more and more relaxed, and you feel Oh, you know, it's actually letting go of that actually will provide me with something better, something nicer, so be good to let go. Thank you. And also it's easier to see it. The more still the mind is the easier to see the variety of, you know, complications, complicated ways the mind operates. I'm wondering whether, you know, any analogy has its limits. I was wondering if the analogy is certain True. Were in the real life in Portola Valley. You saw you even

quantified it. You said one square foot, indeed. So you do a lot of work, you get 234. And eventually you're finished. And you always know about where you are. But I don't think this is true with regard to awakening. Do you ever enlightenment? Do you ever know how far you are down the path? Or the path just keeps going and going? There's no, no measurements allowed? Well, I don't know. I'm not qualified to answer that question. But I can answer it in the way I talked about earlier. That, that for me, the Buddha represents the possibility of clearing it up the whole way and finishing the whole job. And whether the whether there is such a person who ever did that, I'd like to believe that's the case. I don't know. And so, you know, I have some sense of direction and possibility. And so that's how I measure it. answer your question. You measure it for yourself, how would I don't bother measuring it? That's where the analogy and measuring one is measurable. One is not measuring is just another illusion. You know, one of the fun things, one of the really fun things about all this is that you know, you grasp and you realize at some point that what you're grasping is an illusion. And then you realize that the hand that's grasping is an illusion. And then you realize that the one who's trying to grasp these illusion

so so

the floor is an illusion that gunky so you know, measuring it? Yes, please.

Yeah, a couple of things.

I have kind of a funny take on the illusion thing.

I'm

probably most people here familiar with city powers, levitation, mind reading, walking in water and all that good stuff. I think we're under an illusion that we can't do those things. I kind of sense that I feel enlightenment is a normal state of being. Anybody who isn't enlightened is crazy. You can, the evidence of that is just the way the planet is now. So when if you have any ideas how to break through the illusion that we can't do these things, because I just I've always thought that levitating things like that should be a normal thing you could do you just get in touch with that pervading, pervasive consciousness and you should be able to do those things.

Why bother? Why bother, it's usually easier to take their plane

hassling airports now oh yeah

yeah the only people I know who kind of the only people I know about who say they levitate is the TM people and they see mostly because like most like trampoline wildlife they've been bouncing a little bit you know, I don't know what that was about but you know flying can we airplane to get them like father

My main thoughts

another way now that we have Bluetooth so I don't think we need to migrate anymore I you know, I'm not so interested in that so I don't really have an answer for you. To me it's enough to be free of suffering and to have the compassion that comes from that. And the rest is just Disneyland kind of stuff. And I don't even know if it's possible. But if when you when you've learned to fly, please come and show us yeah.

Real quick is

I really relate to what you say about

my blind in sending a certain image and so forth.

And that makes a lot of sense. I

try to do that over the years myself, but then I find myself caught in the hole, the people pleaser and that sort of thing. And I also recognize that there's the other extreme I had a friend years ago and he

he one of his personality traces, he was a braggart.

And he would really turn people off and I tried to suggest

to him you kind of tone things down a little bit, he couldn't see that. So I think in some ways we do have to,

if we have certain traits, we're aware of that. If we embrace you, we eat a ton of some of them down even know this kind of manipulate. We can go along with it.

Oh, yeah, yeah, I think we want to be I think we want to, you know, not cause harm. And so sometimes we need to adjust to we are for the situation we're in. We do that all the time naturally. I mean, you know, you go to a funeral and you don't start talking about usually you don't start talking about, you know, terrible the Giants pitchers are doing this season. You know, you kind of, you know, a loud voice, usually you don't do that at a funeral. You know, that's not the right time you tone that part down. You go to a kindergarten, nursery preschool class and you don't start don't start talking about, you know, sex drugs. You know, you know, to tone that down there. So it's a normal thing to adjust how we are how we present ourselves. And I think it can be it's actually very healthy, to have some field to monitor oneself know what, what effect is on other people and to adjust to how we are to make a healthy effect. No. But to do that, it's possible to do that with some authenticity, it's possible to do it without it. We're not supposed to just go through life without any concern for other people and any without any kind of real self monitoring and self adjusting according to the situation. Sounds like your friend is probably not so socially aware. One more? Yes. If you could wait for the mic, please. I appreciate it.

So

um, I think you already talked about it, but I always forget. And then when you're if you can talk about it one more time, which is I get stuck in thinking that if I meditated enough, I'll somehow have an outcome which may be clearing the mud or and then I get lost and expected to be an outcome and then

there never is one. Yes, if

it says I realized then that what one is supposed to When the idea would be to let it let let it go and let it be.

And so then there seems to be this.

Yeah, so I guess I guess I kind of get stuck there. So that

I understand what you're saying. Sounds like you have kind of magical thinking that if you just sit enough, do your duty and sit enough on the cushion, meditate enough, that's the universe will take care of you in some way and then provide you with enlightenment. And the response to that was one teacher had was if sitting was worried that chickens would be enlightened. So, more is needed than just to sit there has to be some inner engagement in the process of sitting. And if we perform an inner engagement that is, is appropriate for the for the task at hand, and part of the tests are part of the job of the meditators to learn what that inner activity is that is required of us in order to have sitting be productive and helpful. And one of many, many answers that are many aspects to that. But to give you just one little thing that you can leave with today

is to,

to learn how to relax deeply in the mind and heart and how to let go. If you can follow those two guideposts, you'll go really far. There's more to be done, but those those two will take you a long way. Okay, so, thank you and I hope that you have a beautiful linoleum floor where you live. I know