

2009-08-30 Healing Through Awareness

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SPEAKERS

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So

in a collection of cons called the called the gateless Gate, there's a story about a young woman named Sai Joe. And the story of her is that she grew up in a village in China and grew up playing with her cousin Osho. And her and they were best friends. And as they came into puberty or so they decided that they really were meant to marry each other and committed to each other to be married when they grew up. However, the father of say Joe had different ideas for her and he had arranged for her to marry Some men from the other neighboring village. And so when the day came where the man came to marry side Yo, the cousin Otto was quite upset by this. And his reaction was to run away and he went on a boat and went up river. As he was going up the boat up the river he saw along the bank of the river at some point, a figure of a woman running after the boat. And so he went to look closely and it was a side job running after him. And so he got off the gun on the gutter on the boat and they went up the river some distance and started a life together and after five years or so, they had two children and and, you know, established a life in different place. But side yo Mr. Father And the Mr. own village and wanting to go back. And so they decided that maybe after five years, perhaps they can go back and ask for forgiveness and, and perhaps the father would receive them backs especially as they had children now and were established. And so they took a boat back down the river, and Osho went up to the house, well say tight Hi, Joe, and the kids stayed behind on the boat. So the old show went up to the Father knocked in the door and, and told him what had happened, and wanted to confess what happened and as the Father for forgiveness and his blessing and you know, he received them back. And the father looked kind of oddly at him and said this, I don't know what you're talking about. Because psycho, the day you left the day you run away, so I go to bed, and she's been in bed, kind of in a half coma in a daze ever since. All these years here in the house, and so it must be some mistake. She's down by the river and by the nose a mistake and come and look at me look and there she was, you know. So oh and back down to the river and brought up his wife sites. This is SIBO. And as the SIBO came walking through the village, the road towards her old house, the side Joe was who was in the bed, got up and came out of the house to greet the side Joe from the river. And when that greeted the united and became one the traditional Chinese folktale apparently in Zen story from the gateless Gate, move on Khan the are they? The teacher writer asks the question, which is the real psycho The one who stayed behind in bed, they want to went off to marry her childhood sweetheart. So that's that's, you know, classic Zen question. But if we look at this story a little bit in, in our own lives, we start someplace really close meditation. You've been sitting here meditating. And how easy is it to become split here? How easy is it to drift off for 510 15 minutes off into some fantasy world into some thoughts and wake up from that. So where was I, you know, what was I doing thinking about my vacation or thinking about a job interview I have or thinking about remembering some wonderful or terrible things from the past or just making up some pure fantasy about some of us living in this fantasy. And so if we

get lost in this fantasy, there's not really awareness of ourselves here. Present. So that part of us that can be present and alive and awake here?

Where is it?

It's kind of like slideshow in bed, kind of not quite here, kind of not functioning. And what about the one that's off drifting off in some wonderful, fantastic fantasy? Or terrible fantasy? What is that to you? Is that you? Is that who you really are? That's where the energy is. You identify with the fantasy with the thoughts with the feelings that come up, that take you away from being really embodied in presence. And what happens if these two parts come back together? What does it mean to bring them together? What does it mean to connect them? So I think that we can see Easy enough in meditation, how easy it is to drift off and disconnection with oneself. And then when we lose that connection, who's the real one, the one that drifting off, or the one that has been been lost we've been not connected to. And then in daily life, how easy is it to do the same thing? Have you ever been in conversation with someone, and after a while wondered what they were saying, because you were drifting off in some kind of thought. And you weren't present, the part of you that could be alive and present for something wasn't, and rather kind of fantasy went off. I've driven a car the freeway sometimes and missed my exit. Because I was, you know, I was like, I was driving safely enough. I knew enough that I was there, what else going on? But I was so involved in my thoughts that I forgot, wasn't connected to what the purpose of my trip was, and where I was going, Oh, I missed that exit. Simple things. But what about when we get caught up in strong desire? And I know I've had the experience and I imagine some of you have of being really caught by some desire, and, and led down a certain path of life event or activity. And then some point wake up into what was I thinking, sometimes occasionally happens when we get burned by the desire. Oh no. And so again, it's fantasy world over this, we think that this desire this thing we're going to is going to provide happiness and well being. And so we get into that kind of world, but there's a kind of unawareness. There's a loss of awareness as we focus on the object of desire. And so Who are we? Are they? Are we the one who's lost or focused in the object of desire preoccupied with it? Or are we that one or are we that part of are we the person who's we've lost connection with? Who's the real you in these situations where we get split and divided? Fear is something that can split us quite a bit. People can get afraid and in the fear creates a very strong separation within themselves and outside of themselves. between what they want to pay attention to or what they focus on. And sometimes fear we have selective attention. And we notice only those things which we think are frightening. Or we project a lot of capable of projecting into the world around us. frightening things that are not really there. So again, who are we? Are we that part that lives in a fantasy of projection? Are we that part that, that we've lost touch with? It's easy to see I think, and other people are, it's easy, sometimes easy to see how other people put us in categories. We don't they don't see us or us as being completely who we are. Sometimes we're seeing as someone's spouse, or we're seeing as someone's, you know, a byproduct by a profession, or we've some point or other did something nasty and so forever after, were always seen as a nasty person. Even though I was the only one time wherever nasty Or were seen by our ethnicity or received by our gender see in different kinds of ways. And you kind of just want to knock the person on the head and say, Hey, you know, wake up, I'm much more than that, you know, you kind of limited me, you put me in a box doesn't feel comfortable to be in this box. Sometimes it's easy to see how people do that to themselves. They limit themselves, they have said, Yeah, I'm inadequate, I can't do it, I can't do it. Or I'm a bad person, or I'm really the best person or something. And it's a fantasy. It's an idea that we're living in. And some people get caught in that idea. And there's a kind of loss of a certain kind of awareness, loss of certain kind of inner connection to oneself. There's a split between. So when we do it to ourselves, that can be a split between that part of us that we put on one side and that part of us we put it on a different side. There's

parts of us that are unacceptable. I know that when I was 14, I was live, I was going to boarding school and high up in the mountains beautiful place and everyone day walking along the road

with a friend who was 17. And it was just awesome to be in this high mountain place with snow capped mountains and blue, big, big, expensive skies. And this tremendous kind of almost religious feeling welled up in me. You know, what's this all about? Why are we here? And my 17 year old friend turned to me and said, Don't be silly. You know, something that was so open, just closed in that moment. That's not acceptable. So that's not something I'm not going to go there. I'm not gonna I'm not gonna engage that part of my life. And it's been a variety of times in my life where people have made fun of me, where people have threatened me. People have harmed me. were the result of that was somehow I closed down and said, okay, that that's not a place that's acceptable. I can't that two people, I can't even show it to myself I can't act on those those places. And so, who am I? Am I that person who is closed down, close it all down? And my that other side of the of the wall that which has been locked up and not paying attention? Who's the real you? You know, what are the splits that we have? When I wrote my dissertation, or the Buddhist scripture that I studied for my dissertation is a famous Mahayana text called the perfection of wisdom and 8000 lines. And it's kind of strange title. But it's the perfection of wisdom letters literature is seen as the kind of one of the foundations of the huge School of Mahayana Buddhism called the Mahayana. And in the popular mind, people know about this, the this this particular text, the champions, the philosophy of emptiness, everything is empty. And in Mahayana, there's a huge philosophical commentary, philosophical treatises, explaining the profundity and the importance and the value and the truth of how everything is empty, the emptiness of it all. So I'm not going to go into the argument of how this all works. But you have to kind of Believe me, that's considered to be one of the most profound things. But, so I have learned this in my years of Buddhist studies, but when I studied this particular scripture that seemed to emphasize emptiness, I was surprised by what I found in between the teachings on emptiness. There were, in fact, various teachings on emptiness in this text. There were somewhat their teachings were somewhat simplistic. It said over and over again, different forms, everything is empty. Everything's Empty Bowls, everything's empty. Then you don't have to, if that's the only thing you know about If you don't know much about it at all. And one of the things that happened in this, in this movement to Mahayana movement to this text was that in making some kind of universal statement about everything is empty, people just see the emptiness of it all. And for some are seeing the emptiness of it all you can be free. They swept away the psychological emphasis of earlier Buddhism. Earlier, Buddhism had a tremendous emphasis on self awareness and become aware of how your, your inner psychology works, what drives you, what motivates you, what your attachments are, how you're split from yourself, to really understand all these things. And the function of mindfulness was to really kind of highlight this inner life. When everything is seen as being empty, then there was no need to look at all that you're supposed to get it. It was time to see directly into the true nature of reality in some way. The empty mind and overlook the fact overlook that see the tremendous complexity of how the mind operates. So in between the teachings of emptiness, this text has this amazing discussion or that about a cosmic battle between Buddha and Mara Mara is the Buddhist devil and, and the descriptions in the text of how people make spiritual progress has a lot to do with this battle between cosmic battle in these cosmic figures of this cosmic Buddha in this cosmic Mara. someone enters the path

The path because Mark has gotten involved One's involvement with a path or non involvement path is not an issue of one's own will its own motivation in understanding one's own understanding of myself, but rather is attributed to, to this cosmic phenomenon outside of oneself. What I, what I think the people who wrote these texts believed all this, there wasn't just kind of myth. I think what I would just see is that as Buddhism swept away the earlier emphasis in psychology, and self understanding, there had still there was still, there still was a need to explain causality how things happen in the world. And so

they described it magically described mythically described it's kind of these big forces outside of oneself. When we when we create a split inside of ourselves, split where we don't see ourselves and understand what actually drives us how we actually function. We still need explanations of why Things happen to us. And one of the ways people sometimes will do it, is by attributing it to forces outside, or, or forces within us that we have no control over. Sometimes there's kind of deep, deep, deep or very strong. resorting to intuition. There's some deep intuitive knowing that you know that the fact that God is talking to me that I should, you know, kidnap someone, you know, just know it. The there's just deep splits that can happen. And the function of Buddhists of Buddhist mindfulness practice, I would say, is to heal all these splits. So that and the way we heal it is through awareness. Through becoming aware, and then expanding our awareness to include more and more of what goes on within us. And it and not to have a simplistic idea this all is empty or simplistic idea that the mind is empty or that our true nature is consciousness or something, but rather to see clearly how it all works, or not all of it, but enough of it, so that we begin understanding where our freedom resides. Our freedom of choice, our freedom to choose how to act, without being able to see where we have choice, there is no choice. If we, if we don't see where the choice is, and we still act in the world, then we have to kind of figure out some way to attribute the motivation, the impulse to act from and I say that kind of confused. So if we don't know if we're acting in the world, and we don't see how we have a choice in how we act, we still need to attribute responsibility to something. And so sometimes people attributed to forces outside sometimes do strange things within themselves. But if we see where the choice is, we see how the inner psychology works, there's less and less need to be Or to kind of metaphysical or magical or kind of other kinds of ideas to to explain how things work, when really sees. That's why it is when I'm afraid of strangers. And I think he being afraid of strangers. Maybe I'm afraid something in myself. I knew someone who, who got really upset by the horrors of the world, the horrors of the world. It's reasonable to get upset somewhat, but it was uncannily upset. And this person got particularly upset with the violence and cruelty to animals to pets. And it was kind of it was kind of like bizarre how much this person and as we went into it and explored it. It turned out this person was so had been traumatized as a child. Some kind of violence. And that was very afraid to touch that place of fear and pain, that she had leftover legacy from a childhood experience. And so that fear of touching that was somehow projected out to these, you know, the cruelty to animals somehow the cruelty to animals was the way she placed her fear or upset about her own pain. or somehow it resonated with her own pain that split an inability to deal with her own pain was projected out to this kind of sense a horror about what goes on outside. If we if we don't understand how we work within then, many times we don't understand how the world works. We don't understand how we relate to the world why we react and respond to the world in the way that we do. So, sideshow, there were two sides yose, which is the real side job.

And I don't know there's an answer to the koan. But that doesn't stop me. I think that neither was the real side, Joe. And you could say, well, the real side Joe was the one that came together was united. But that's a little bit too idealistic. I would like to say that I would like to suggest that the real side Joe was the two of them when they came to the road, and they greeted each other. It was in the greeting, in the Enter of meeting each other in a seeing each other in the interest of go out and meet oneself. That's where the real psycho is found. And because maybe we never completely come to the United, maybe there's always splits. There's always things that go on. But the willingness to turn and open up to oneself to turn into oneself and see Oh, here This is why this is where I'm uncomfortable. This is how I'm afraid. This is how I'm lost in fantasy. So if you lost in fantasy in meditation, when I approach, noticing that is to reject that. That's not really who I am. And I need to come back here and be embodied and present and awake, and this is who I really am. But I think that maintains a split between some idea of me who is awake and present, versus the me that gets drifts off into fantasy. What we can do in mindfulness is rather than rejecting the world of fantasy and that involvement, we can turn towards it and be aware of it mindfully. So with a sense of self possession, in the sense of being, having

kind of be present and aware that here I am, and here I have a person who is fantasizing and really see that oh, here's fantasizing and be present for it. Don't reject and all that Go get the life force is bringing up fantasy this moment. And then what is that about? What's driving the fantasy? I've done people, you know, sometimes it's boredom. Sometimes it's compensation. I've had a hard day. This is much better. I mean, I've had people on meditation retreats have told me that occasionally, I had such a hard time that and that one sitting where I spent the whole day sitting fantasizing because I just felt like I just deserved a break. Or sometimes it's fear. I do. You don't want to face something, it's better to go and spend time in fantasy. So to become whole is not to reject the fantasy but to turn towards and understand really see it for what it is and see what drives it. To to be filled with desire for something addiction for something which is a great way to be split in this Touch with oneself. If we had the idea, I suppose to reject my desire, reject my addiction, I shouldn't do that and come back to some, you know, be a pure Buddhist person who has no attachments, no desires. And so I'll come back and steal myself up, sit up strong and straight and be non attached. That I think we continue to split. Rather than doing kind of rejecting something and coming back to some kind of ideal kind of way of being. What we're doing Mike can do a mindfulness is to turn around, turn. turn ourselves 180 degrees out. 80 degrees around awareness 180 degrees around. In other words, turn awareness away from the object of desire. Turn it around all the way 180 degrees and meet yourself subjectively as a person who has desire. What is desiring feeling? What's it like to be desiring if we're blinded by the object? We might not see What really desire is happening, what's motivating it? What's causing it? And what's really about what's happening there. So in the story of psycho, psycho is, most of the story is presented as someone who lives in relationship to someone else. As a child, she's in a relationship with our cousin who's our playmate, and then as it's on point to someone who decides to marry her cousin, she's presented as someone who's a daughter of a father. She's presented someone who becomes the wife and of the sky. She's someone who becomes a mother. Someone who wants to go back to be with her father. It's all about being in relationship in some people who they think they are and very important part of who they think they are somehow in founding relationship. It's not to be belittle. It's a very important part of life.

But But what happens if we but inside your meta self on the road and united and that part of the story there's nothing said about her being in a relationship anything anymore can a person be can a person be can it can you be can you be alive and present and awake without measuring yourself or defining yourself in relationship to anything relationship to people relationship to desires, relationship to fears, relationship to you know, bank accounts, a lot of things can be So, in the case of you know, So the drive to be in relationship to understand a certain relationship is a big part of human life. What happens if we turn towards that? enter into that world? What do we see there? Then we start seeing or unpacking, many of the moment And emotions and beliefs and ideas that go into supporting our desire to be in a relationship a certain kind of way or have a certain kind of relationship. So what I'm arguing here suggesting here today is that we don't want to split ourselves with mindfulness. We want to open up the mindfulness to be inclusive, to include to include. So rather than splitting it, by some spiritual ideals, emptiness, some kind of ideal idea of being mindful and present. Rather than splitting ourselves and saying some part of me is unacceptable. And I shouldn't be doing that I shouldn't be paying attention to that. What mindfulness we have inclusive mindfulness is to is to see what's happening for us as it's happening. And turn towards it the Certain Way turn towards her with mindfulness with awareness. See, this is what's happening. This is what's going on and then more deeply we see what's happening. The more we are inclusive included all the more we'll see that we have choice about how to act. We have choice, one of the very important forms of choice we have is the choice not to act, not to keep thinking over thinking not to keep doing what we're doing. We might we might not have control over what our thoughts are, what our motivations desires are, they bubble up, but we do have a choice about whether we act on them. And that's a very important freedom. We also have a choice at some point because of that freedom to stop and not act on things. We also then have the choice to act in

different ways start thinking about different things, acting in different ways, saying different things. And that idea of choice is really at the heart of Buddhist practice of developing a mindfulness inclusive enough that we have our we see there, the array Choice clearly enough that we could start being free. The cost of freedom is awareness. And the prize of awareness is freedom. Freedom requires the ability to have choice. And choice requires our ability to be aware and really see what's going on. So who are you? Which side? Joe? Are you? Are you asleep? In bed? Are you disconnected? Are you off chasing your dream up the river? What have you left behind? How are you split in some ways? How do you split? And what does it mean to become one again? And as a meditation teacher, I'm less interested in you becoming one as I am interested, that you go out in the street and have the to meet that you turn towards what's there. You Meet what's there, that you discover what it's like to be inclusive. To have this and to be inclusive includes at all I hope also means to have tremendous compassion for all of who you are and for all this inclusive and present, willing to meet yourself willing to include it all. However beautiful and however difficult it is.

So is that enough for?

Yes, please wait for the mic to be appreciated.

Clinton,

why do you even need the one that was left behind? Why do we need to know who has been left behind? why did

why was the one that was left behind even necessary? Why?

Why was it necessary? Why was the one that was left behind even that necessary? Why not just just

why was the upriver one What? Not enough? Oh, that's a very good question. The Well, I think that whenever we're split from ourselves, there's a seemingly almost innate desire to be home. And so because there's a tremendous cost of being split, takes a lot of energy, a lot of effort to not no part of ourselves and have these barriers and walls. So, to chase after a dream, in such a way that it causes a split divides us up, I think that it's it's painful, it's we become disconnected from part of who we are. So I think that there's a, I think I believe that there's kind of a natural pull towards healing, the splits that are there. If you sit quietly enough, pay attention sensitive enough, I think there's a desire for that to happen. And we see that there's a lot of people who, who feel disconnected with themselves in some way. They engage in some very intensive work for a long time in a culture of work where they're focused only on their work and making money. And they realized after a while, that's a real cost that they've left themselves by not their hearts behind. And, and so then they will have to find my heart. Because you know, it doesn't make sense to be around a computer terminal all day and Do not have real human connections. Is that adequate to answer? Yes. I'd love it if someday someone said no, that didn't work for me.

Let me know if you can't hear. It's on. Okay.

Well, that story reminded me of two things. One is I just read that a version of that story and I think it's jack kornfield, after the ecstasy, the laundry, where he talks about it in terms of people's disconnection from their bodies. And it was very interesting interpretation of that show I encourage people to look at.

The other thing it reminded me of was a book I read a couple of years ago about it was mostly about Victoria Woodhall, who was the first woman to run for president the united states back With Frederick Douglass as her running mate, so that gives you maybe an idea of when in the 1860s 1870s. So the book is very much about feminism and what women's lives were like then. And it's, I don't remember the name, but there was a particular woman in the story. It's a real person

who

was in an unhappy marriage and basically retired to her bed ill because she didn't want to have more children. And the comment was there are a lot of women do doing that who had who were essentially like sideshow in bed, apparently ill for no reason. And that the probable reason was that they were being forced to have children. So, when I hear that psycho story, I think Well, okay, it's I chose to have any choice. In realistic terms, that was a fantasy that she could only experience in her head. And the only way to stay out of a marriage to somebody she didn't want was to pretend to be ill or to become ill, essentially psychosomatic illness. So, I think we can look at it in terms of, you know, if we have the freedom, are we denying a part of ourselves that we want? You can also look at it as what happens when people are forced into things by society. Yeah. And that that's one of the things that happens is they can shut down like that,

right? I think absolutely. Society, family may things can create untenable, very difficult conditions and some people's response is to shut down some people's responses to run away some people's responses to attack and get angry. There's many responses but they all kind of responses that split and And it's easy in those kind of situations, it seems almost appropriate in situations to blame difficult situations, those situations are causing me to do this. When when someone when someone is engaged in Buddhist practice, the tremendous challenge of this practice is to learn to take back the responsibility to oneself. Realize that the split is within oneself. And it's very hard to overcome these kinds of shutting down splits, for example, when the world is so oppressive, and people live under very oppressive conditions. But it's possible and I don't know, you know, what, what it requires someone to find that inner freedom. We live in an oppressive conditions, but we certainly have examples of exceptional people who have done that in terrible conditions, who have stayed free. And right now it comes who comes to mind as Nelson Mandela, Mandela, you know, he was in this horrible prison. And he seemed to maintain his inner freedom in that oppressive situation he didn't split.

So what does it take? And

it certainly takes a lot of courage. And I think it also takes a willingness to be uncomfortable. It takes a willingness not to act, not not to believe our fears.

I'm also reminded of a quote short quote, which was Alexander Graham Bell saying that some some along the lines of sometimes we're so busy staring at the closed door, that we neglect to see the open door. And so for me, that story is kind of like, Well, okay, sideshow saw herself as having only two choices. And where is that open door? What would her other choice of Van or what other choices might she have had, if

She couldn't just run away? Well,

yeah, it's a good. It's a good question. There's an infinite number of choices. And the issue is not the choices, we're looking at the choices The issue is for Buddhism is the freedom to have those choices. And so what does it take? And so I'm suggesting that mindfulness in the practice of turning towards

everything and admitting everything being present, everything will show us that the places of choice, and then we can, and then depending on causes and conditions and situations and many different things, we'll choose different things. And there's a huge array of choices that human beings have, not just to. And so what is the most useful then the question is a whole array of choices we have, what are the most useful important ones to act on? And since it now it's time to eat. I won't go into that. So, thank you very much, and I hope that those of you who would like stay for the potluck and If you have been here for a long time, if you would introduce yourself as someone who looks like they're relatively new, so they feel welcome, that would be great. And everyone's welcome to stay for the potluck. Thank you.