

2010-04-10 Entanglements

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SPEAKERS

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So, in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, there's a poem which is quite famous, because it was used as the opening or the question to be answered in a very famous book called The path of purification. Book about Theravada Buddhist practice. And that opening poem goes like this. The inner tangle and the outer tangle this, this generation is entangled at a tangle. So, I asked of Gautama, I asked the Buddha, this question who succeeds disentangling that tangle. So the inner tangle and the outer tangle, this whole generation is entangled in a tangle. So a few things. One is that this generation being entangled is not a modern thing that's been going on for a long time. And the second is this idea, the tangle being entangled, that somehow we get entangled, we get caught up and we get knotted up in our life, both the inner life that's within and also the outer life, the world around us. And so what's the nature of this tangle and it's being knotted up in being caught up in and how do we disentangle how do we are not ourselves? And in the, again in the Theravada tradition, the idea being knotted up with, a very important idea doesn't exist seemed like a very deep technical word being knotted up. But it is actually kind of a technical term. Sometimes in English, it's translated as better, to be caught, be fettered, but actually the word itself means to be knotted up with. And then the mindfulness practice, in the Satipatthana Sutta. And the discourse in the four foundations of mindfulness, one of the applications or directions of mindfulness is to notice the nuts the Howard knotted up. And the way that is described his background for this is that in one way of looking at human experience, is that one of only 18 things can happen. There's really only 18 things that could possibly happen to you. So maybe 18 seems like a lot they it seems like little but Sony really only 18 things. And how do you get to 18 is, in this Buddhist tradition, they said there's six cent stores, you can only know things because you didn't know it through your eyes, through your ears, through your nose, through your tongue, through your body, tactile. And I think hopefully that's fine, right? And then or through your mind, the mind or this, that the the, the sense organs, it's able to pick up a book, what goes on in the mind or the heart, thoughts, feelings and all that. So and so there's those six doors, six senses. And then there's the objects of those senses. So for the eyes, there's the sight objects, which you see in the world. For the ear. There's those hearing object things you hear. For the nose, there's smells, for tastes for the tongue. There's tastes that come along For a tactile sensing, there's the touches the body has. And then for the mind, there's all this internal stuff that we can be aware of. So, now we've gotten to 12. Right? And how you get 18 is that between the object that we can see, and I that sees in the sense, or the experience of seeing, or with that, or that in between, but there's this there's, there's the object. There's the experience of the sensing, the experience of seeing. And then there's a knot that gets formed between those, the entanglement. So I see the bell here, it's a beautiful bell. There's the bell which exists even if I don't see it, but then with my eye, my eye is in front of it and there's experience of seeing and then I can get entangled in this bell. I could want it this is a perfect bell for meditation center, I think is really good for my meditation. I should take it home with me. It should be mine or All kinds of

ways are why we have such a small bell at IMC with becoming a very important meditation center we should have a gold plated Bell oh yes that's right we only have one and

and then I get entangled in that one thinking what are we doing with a gold plated does not really go but you know it's kind of ostentatious and now embarrassed about it, you know, so then tangled with that and making those story around it. Or you can get caught up in, in some in sounds. So there's here we are this prestigious Theravada meditation center, and we have all this loud traffic sounds going by. And it's great. It's good for mindfulness, we should have more sounds, or it's terrible. How could we do this? And it's not just sounds, not just traffic sounds just like I get entangled in it. And so it goes on and on. So you're sitting in your body and you feel pain. And, and so, you might do you get entangled in and you think great pain, it keeps gonna keep me awake. Or let's have more of it that really cuz we're supposed to be good for practice to have a lot of pain, you know, more you suffer that, you know, that's an entanglement or there's a version resistance. This is terrible, you know, I was coming to have this pristine, beautiful meditation day it was supposed to be this beautiful bliss and happiness and peace and, and I'm sure everyone else here is sitting in infinite bliss and rates for Buddhahood. And I'm the only one sitting here with knee pain. And this is really distraction. This shouldn't be happening. This is bad. I'm a bad meditator because I can't, because I'm having pain. So all those kinds of ideas are an entanglement resistance aversion, desire, wanting it as opposed to just letting it be really simple. There's pain, and there's the experience of pain. So the same thing with the inner landscape. There can be all kinds of things going on. Maybe the mind is quite distractible today. So the mind wanders way a lot. So you, the inner sense organs sees that the mind wanders away and thoughts. The entanglement is, this shouldn't be happening. I'm a bad meditator. This is a bad mind. This is unfortunate, or this is really great that I'm having distract distracting thoughts. I've had a challenging day today, I deserve to be distracted by wonderful fantasies. And so we get entangled with our desire, wanting it doing something with it. So somehow or other, so those are the eight things 18 things that can happen. So that makes it kind of simple, right? There's all these variations of those. But one of the approaches to mindfulness practice is to see that this is all that goes on. To make it more complicated, is to get in is to get entangled is to get caught up in the world of complications around at all. And one way to find some degree of freedom and peace from our experience is to is to look at our experience through the lens of these 18 experiences. And then to focus Focus on are these 12 experiences 12 things and to focus on how we get entangled in sight objects, how we get entangled with, with the experience of hearing how we can entangle the experience of smell or taste or touch, or the inner landscape of them in our life. And then to learn to disentangle it. And this process of disentangling is a very important one in our, in this mindfulness tradition, how not to be so wrapped up in the experience. It's not to make the experience necessarily go away, but how to not be so wrapped up in it. So, one of the ways we get wrapped up in it, is by being for or against the experience. So we think this is good, this is bad, I want it I don't want it and so that can be mild, innocent enough or it can be so compelling and compulsive, that we're really lost in the world of wanting and not wanting, it can seem that wanting or not wanting is something that is has so much authority that they're so built into the system that we believe our desires, we believe our versions, we believe that they're justified, they're right. And sometimes maybe they are right enough to have certain versions or certain desires, but that it's gonna be so compelling that so much authority that we don't question whether the entanglement that they produce and so we're being there's compulsion around these desires, these aversions that keep us wrapped up in the experience caught up in experience driven by the experience, as opposed to staying really simple. Oh, there's pain is an uncomfortable experience. There's a desire there's a thought that arises it's a thought process. Something that you desire, and there's no need to get involved in that. It's possible just to see it.

So to be disentangled from desire, is not to stop having desire, but is to see Oh, here's an experience a desire. And there's desire there. And there's the awareness of desire here. I am not my desire, there is

desire. And, and when you as soon as you think I am my desire, I'm justified having the desire, I'm supposed to have the fulfillment of my desire. If I don't have the desire fulfilled, something terrible is gonna happen. That's all to be entangled, but to simply see the arising of a desire, as arising of a desire, and to see and to have it's really clear separation of you from the desire or the awareness from the desire itself, is the part of this process of disentangling. Same thing with inversion. Same thing with, with the physical experience. If you identify very strongly or entangled really closely with a physical experience, then there's no freedom there. But if you can see, oh, there's pain, or there's pleasure. And in a way, you know, I'm not the pain and the pleasure is just pain and pleasure. I don't have to do anything about the pain, pleasure, there can be awareness of it. Then there's a separation, or what we call in the tradition of disentangling from it. Now once we're disentangled, there's a capacity, the ability to be more discerning and what to do about it. So maybe if your knee hurts, once you're disentangled, then you can say, you know, it's not useful to this is going to hurt me. So I think I'll move my leg. But when we're when we're entangled, then there's less wisdom and understanding of what goes on. When we could be disentangled. To be entangled, is to always believe whatever impulse arises in an entanglement. So some people in meditation always moving every time there's uncomfortable. Another way to be caught in entanglement is to believe that, that every entangle every pain, for example, every difficulty, you're supposed to tough it out, you're supposed to kind of resist it. That's also a kind of entanglement and I've known people who've hurt themselves in meditation by just kind of toughing out whatever pain that's there. But to be disentangle and to see more clearly allows for some greater wisdom to operate and decide what's useful to do. So the same thing with thoughts, you know, thoughts happen, guaranteed to happen some kind of thought here. But are you entangled and thought, are you able to see or this is just thinking and thoughts come in all kinds of flavors. There's thoughts of what has to happen, the thoughts of what should happen, the thoughts of what shouldn't happen. The thoughts of this means that this means if I, if I don't get more if I don't get concentrated by the end of the day, this means that I'm a failure in the meditation world. It's possible to have those kinds of thoughts. Or if you do get concentrated, this means I'm a really great Yogi, really great meditator. I'm the, you know, God's gift to the Buddhism. But to see it as the arising of a thought, and to that just a thought, without being involved in the thought, without believing a thought, is the part of the process of becoming disentangled. There's emotions that occur, lots of emotions can occur. And, and for some people, it's the emotions where they get entangled. As soon as there's an emotion, they're so primed to interpret it. They say meaning to it to, to identify whether to use the emotion to define this as who I am. And so part of the process of disentangling is to learn to see Oh, it's just an emotion. This is anger, as opposed to being afraid of the anger, justify the anger or push the anger away or hold on to the anger. Or think that the existence of anger means that fill in the blank, just anger, just the existence of anger. The disentangling process of mindfulness is pointing us in the direction of a kind of simplicity with whatever is going on, to learn to be very simple. It's okay. And just be aware, this is what's happening now. This is what's happening now. This is what's up. And now to make a lot of make a lot out of it. It's very freeing to learn how simple you can be with things with experience. This is irritation

So there's kind of like a gap or a space between whatever is happening and your involvement with it, you're doing something about it or doing something because of it. So that kind of a little bit of space, a little gap, a little distance, creation of a distance between you and your experience, but not a distance that's an aloofness. And so this is where the three steps I talked about this morning can help support kind of a healthy disentangling. So I talked about recognition, feeling the experience, and then relaxing around it relaxing with it, just three steps. So if you can relax with the experience, being tense is means that you become entangled. You've been caught by it somehow you've been pushed around by it, you're involved with it. So if you can just soften with it that can help you be feeling Before disentangled, no matter how difficult and big and momentous the experience might be, how frightening it might be, can you just kind of soften around, relax around it some way. And one of the ways to do this, that

makes it for some people simple or straightforward, is to do it physically. To go look and see in your body, where is the tension? And, and where's the tension where How are you being held? And is it possible to soften the shoulders to possibly shock soften the belly. It's really good to do that with a posture that's upright, dignified. One of the ways to get entangled and experienced physically is to collapse physically. I saw this one year, many years ago, where I was feeling depressed. And I went home and I collapsed on my couch and I was such a I was being such a thorough, completely good couch potato, that my shoulders were basically in the crack between the backrest and the seat, you know, sunk that far into, you know, the down and out. And it was so dramatic that poor Gill was sitting there. And the posture was so dramatic that I, the I said what would happen if I stood up straight? So I sat up completely straight there. And to my amazement, and this is not you know, there's no guarantee that's gonna happen, get me ever again or to you. But to my amazement, the, the depression just vanished just like that. When I had that kind of energy and alertness, and uprightness and dignity, just sitting up straight, there was something about how the posture contributed or enabled the depression or supported the depression. So you might experiment with that when you have different emotions. Look at your posture. Fear produces certain kinds of posture anxiety does certain things in different parts of the body desire does something with your posture tenses up certain parts and leaning forward perhaps, to explore, to explore your, what goes on, and how your posture is involved or it helps with the entanglement. And, and you don't want to just relax into further kind of, you know, if you're already a couch potato, you know, you don't want to relax further into it, then you probably get more depressed, but to have an aligned upright posture. And then to soften and relax, have a posture that gives you a sense of stability, or grounding. And then that grounded posture, then soften around the experience is one of the ways to help you with this kind of disentangling. The other is to feel experience. Because often when we're attached or entangled, we're not really experiencing what's really happening. We're not really feeling and being present. So for example, if you're if you are one Other ways to be entangled with Airbus going on, is to spend a lot of time thinking about it. I have ideas, anticipating what it means into the future and reviewing it, what that was about in the past. Try to analyze it, figuring it out, there's a lot of thinking about it. And that thinking keeps us separate from the experience itself. Or it keeps us kind of separate, but in an entangled way, kind of not really allowing us to kind of see clearly what's actually happening here. So to actually to relax and to feel, makes the experience hopefully a lot simpler, and not so elaborate, so involved so complicated. We're not trying to do kind of this mental gymnastics of analysis or figuring out or solving or just keep it really simple, just feel it.

And then even simpler, is just to know it and not To know it in a way that is aloofness indifference, kind of a distance of kind of aversion, but rather knowing is something very direct and very simple. Knowing that arises because we're present for the experience with some degree a little bit, you know, some modicum of relax around the experience, and just know that this is what's happening. The ultimate disentanglement in this mindfulness practice is to see that there's a difference between what's being experienced and the knowing of the experience. So there can be hearing, they hear the smell, highest pitch sound, they're out there, and there's a knowing that I'm having the experience knowing that I'm hearing something. There is breathing in Maybe the chest rises as you breathe in. And there's a knowing that chest rises. to clearly see that the knowing is distinct from the experience is a very important part of mindfulness practice. When people do concentration practice, that difference is actually not important difference to know. With concentration practice, you're supposed to actually almost collapse the distinction between knowing and experience. You almost be like you become the breath, you become the experience. And, and this becomes everything becomes subject in a sense. When you do mindfulness practice, everything becomes object, or you become the ultimate subject where everything becomes object, where you Oh, there's, there's a thought. And there's a knowing I know of having that thought and that knowing is distinct from having the thought. There is having, hearing a sound and knowing you're hearing the sound. Is this the From the hearing itself, there's

pleasure in the body or something uncomfortable in the body, and the knowing of the pleasant and the unpleasant. That's distinct from the pleasant, the unpleasant. It's kind of like having a mirror, where there's the object in front of the mirror. And the mirror reflects accurately what's there, but the reflection is not the thing. So mindfulness unfolds, begins to become strong. When the when the recognition the knowing of the of the object is very simple and distinct and clearly seen as being distinct from what's known. And then we're no longer so entangled. Then when you can, when that becomes a strong experience, then whatever is happening can freely happen. And you are independent from it, because the knowing is independent from what's being known. And there's A lot of freedom or the path to freedom is found when knowing is independent of what is known. They arise together. You can't know anything without knowing it. You can't know anything without it being there. You know in our direct experience, but but to really be aware that the knowing is distinct from the experience gives us a door into become being free being disentangled from the experience. And then mindfulness unfolds or gets stronger on its own, when that distinction is seen very clearly, if a person is focusing on being concentrated, then that as useful as concentration is, concentration itself maintains a kind of intimacy or closeness where it's hard for the knowing To be distinct from what is known is kind of a collapsing in between the kind of non dual non dualistic dualistic experience between you know experience and the knowing of it the two become almost indistinguishable. And, but for freedom to occur there has to be a disentangling clear clearly seeing of all the different component parts of experience with each of these things arises on its own, without being caught or entangled by any other part of the experience. So as a thought, and the knowing of the thought, and no 10 no tendency to be caught by the thought or be pushed around by the thought or picking up the thought. It's just a thought. There's a thought.

And then we know there's this independent, knowing independent presence awareness, here I am, and thinking occurs, I'm not the thought. It just thought thinking arises and when you have that kind of disentangled experience that kind of independence, then it's possible to not be troubled by anything that occurs. And this is really part of the beauty, the tremendous beauty of mindfulness practice, where you really don't have to reject anything. And you don't have to embrace anything. You don't have to be for anything or against anything. The world can be what it is, your mind can do what it does, for the most part. If you're not entangled, then nothing is a problem. When you're entangled, then things are problematic. But when that's you know, the mirror, the mirror is not troubled by what's in front of the mirror. Something that's really awful can be in front of the mirror. The mirror doesn't mind it's reflects that something's really beautiful and wonderful. in front of the mirror the mirror reflects that the mirror is not troubled by what What is in front of it? So the mind also, and, and what I like about the analogy of the mirror, there's a kind of a beauty to that mirror, there's something beautiful about the mirror, or the very still Lake that's completely still reflects your face in the mirror and the surface, something very beautiful, but peace, that stillness, that shine Enos. There's something really precious about it. And so the same thing with knowing mind when it's still and quiet and capable. It's not a diminishment of you. It's not us know, kind of withdraw from the world. But it's kind of like a freedom from the world or it's kind of like the lotus blossom that grows up out of the muddy water, and it's untouched by the mud. So we're connected to the world, but there's a freedom in the midst of the world as well. So to be the inner tangle and the outer tangle This whole generation is entangled in a tank. And I asked of Gotama this question, Who is it that succeeds to disentangle the tangle. So it might be interesting for you to look a little bit at how you get knotted up. And this simple idea that they're seeing. There's the art of what we see. There's the experience of seeing, and then how do we, what happens between those? What happens with that? Do we do anything with it? Can we just let it Let it be just an experience of seeing? Or do we get involved in how do we get involved in is that involvement? Could it could it be a form of entanglement we lose our freedom? Or is there a different way of seeing so it's just seeing without being caught by it? Can they be a thought can there be a feeling inside, and it just just let it be very, very simple. And then the or freedom or happiness or peace is found. And that simplicity of just

knowing. Initially, it might not seem like so special, because the knowing doesn't seem like it's very strong or very important, especially in relationship to all the wonderful things that go on in the world that we're caught up in. That seems so important. But as the mindfulness gets stronger, the strength of that mirror the strength of that piece, or that well being extends out in highlight, and it becomes more clear than that becomes really valuable in its own right, more valuable than a lot of the things you can be caught up in. And so there's a very clear almost Very clear kind of preference your mind for that which is more valuable compared to that, which is not. So for example, leaving here today, maybe some of you are a little bit calmer, more settled, more clear, maybe tired, it's still and then you normally would be. So the sense of presence maybe or the mindfulness that you do have today through day of sitting. As you're sitting here now, what's more valuable, staying calm, present and mindful, or getting in your car and on the freeway and pushing the gas pedal and trying to rush around and get to that next green light before it turns yellow, and just kind of rushing ahead? What's more valuable? I hope that

staying calm and relaxed is more valuable than beating the red light. Simple things simple difference. Some of you might not think that way. The old habit of kind of trying to get to the next place as fast as you can, might seem more important. But maybe not. That's a simple thing to compare with. But then we can compare to more and more important things in our life, where we get caught up in. So there's this, with time, the mind starts having a preference for the value, the beauty, the relaxing the peace, of knowing itself. So I hope that this day has been nice for you to be sitting here. And I think it's very valuable. To do this together as a community sit together, there are people and everyone who everyone who joins the day like today is contributing to the day. Even if you had a difficult time and you felt like your mindfulness wasn't very good and strong or whatever. That's just the fact that you were sitting here and in offering the practice of practicing. You were supporting a community of other people. Doing it, it was your contribution to this group, the same way hopefully you felt that you were at some degree supported by the rest of the people here. We're all in it together. And it's, I feel it's very important the sense of mutual support and, and creation of this environment. So I say that took snort to express my gratitude for all of you being here. And, and I certainly appreciate it. And may whatever benefit that has come from this day of practicing here, may we carry it with us as we leave here, and consider how we can translate that benefit into benefiting the world around us. So if you're a little bit calmer today than usual, may you bring that calmness to your interaction with others. If you're more patient, if you're less caught up in things, maybe you can be less reactive to people around you as you go. Do you feel a little bit more compassionate or generous towards yourself or towards me translate that to being a little more compassionate or caring for the people that you encounter the rest of the day. I think it's really important to reflect a little bit about how the benefits of this practice to you receive that how you turn it around and offer it to others as well. It's not just for yourself. Thank you