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SPEAKERS

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So one of the interesting and very frightening topics is how to two people meet. How do you really meet someone else? What does it mean to encounter someone and really see them really meet them and be met by someone else? It's an interesting topic. And then what is how does that relate to meditation practice is that in meditation practice, we learned to meet ourselves in such a way that we learned to let go of our inhibitions or fears or greed or attachments. And to be able to be here in a very clear and open way. And then the interesting, it's nice to do it and some people go off and retreats, meditation retreats where they can do that. In higher quality way, and it's very meaningful for them to be very transformative to them. And then people come back to their regular life. And then maybe they don't really want to look someone in the eye, they turn away or, or they meet someone and they want to, you know, their desires are at the forefront of what they want in their relationship, or their fears or their aversions, or their attachments, or preoccupations, or all kinds of things that come into play. But what happens when we meet someone else? And, and we can meet them with the same clarity or the same? letting go, as we have maybe in meditation or deep meditation? And is it interesting to do that? And in some schools of Buddhism, they don't, don't focus on that. It's not a big deal. I mean, do they mean what does that have meaning to me whereas other people have to do with your freedom. And, and other schools of Buddhism, give it some emphasis. And in the Zen tradition where I trained, there was a fair amount of emphasis on this where, how to pay to people meet. And, and it wasn't just like meeting some you know, in zen, it wasn't just a matter of meeting only matter meeting someone you meet on the street. But what happens when two practitioners meet? What happens when two people who have maybe meditated or have the capacity to let go deeply? What happens when they meet and encounter? And so people can have a number of theories about that people who haven't. But I think that what's interesting is there's so many different ways of meeting. There's not just one way and it's interesting to kind of the fluidity to be able to kind of move around and back and forth and all the different ways that two people can encounter each other and beat see each other. But it's quite somebody can beat someone else who's dropped their attachments here. temporarily, to drop their fears or their inhibitions and are able to meet with a kind of real presence of mind real presence and attention. And so in that regard, it's interesting to think about some of the misunderstandings, so the Buddhist teachings on not self, sometimes erroneously called the teachings of no self. And when people think that Buddhism says there's no self, then people think that they're supposed to, you know, that they don't count or they're supposed to disappear. You're supposed to be really humble if you're Buddhist, or self effacing. And, you know, always defer to someone else or except whatever's going on and, and, you know, the statue we have here with the Buddha is on my mind a little bit today because today I was invited to elementary school to been 20 minutes introducing Buddhism to the students there and they asked me to bring the symbols of my faith with me. So I brought our statue with us and held it up for them to see. And I talked about this man who the Buddha is a person who is not self effacing not humble and not necessary ways, but also not proud. It comes in a conceited way or arrogant, but upright, sits upright straight, a

certain dignity. dignified person, and the Buddha was not in the kind of image we have in the Buddha sitting in the statue is not someone who seems to feel like he doesn't count because he's no self, therefore he doesn't count he can't have any desires or wishes and so these kind of be, you know, a lumper Mr. Natural in the desert. But, but this is a man who's sitting quite upright justice quite open and present. And the statue is at least the eyes are half open, meaning that he both look looking both equally inside and seeing what's going on, but also is connected to the world outside to people with this compassion.

And so you know, there's sometimes a misunderstanding, the teaching of not self is meaning some kind of belittling of self or you, you don't really count. And I think that's a misunderstanding. And then there's sometimes people try to explain the teaching of no self as an antidote to the difficulties that sometimes arise from American individualism. And I think you probably most of you have heard accounts of how sometimes individualism excessively done leads to alienation. Because if it's all about personal autonomy, then there's no connection to anybody else. It's like, if you if you're the only one who speaks the language, then it's no good language is by communicating with other people. And so to get to know to be to emphasize that I'm an individual I was to have my own everything on my own, live with myself and my own house and take care Myself and done excessively can ignore the tremendous interconnectedness which supports our life. We're less autonomous than most people have been in history. And we insist on our autonomy. And, and we're independent, we have to make our own choices and find our own way and me myself in mind is really big. And, you know, the home is my castle. And then a castle has a moat and guard towers and centuries. And, you know, it's difficult to get in there. As it because of this excessive individualism which separates people from each other creates a kind of alienation. It's not uncommon for Western Buddhist teachers to describe the not self teaching and Buddhism as a teaching of there being no separate self. There's no absolute separate, independent self separate from everything else and everybody else I think this is a little bit of a little bit of an erroneous way of teaching Buddhism, at least it's a little bit kind of a Hindu flavor, I think of Buddhism and some of the people who talk about it are influenced by Hinduism different kinds, where the idea is to kind of merger with the divine and not to hold yourself separate but merge with that which is most divine. And, and see you do not separate from that which is ultimate. But the Buddha didn't teach merger. And he also didn't teach independence or alienation, kind of a third kind of way of being and and, you know, we talked about merger are they supposed to discover you know, your non separateness some people misunderstand that as being some kind of codependent kind of merger or kind of giving oneself up in connection or in the intimacy with someone else. And it can be quite beautiful to give oneself up and merge with someone else. But you can also lose touch with yourself in that way and lose touch with your own values or your what's going on with you and your yourself. So if you can be too autonomous, then you're not connected to someone else. But if your give up your autonomy and merge with someone, then you've also lost yourself in some way. So what happens here we have this Buddha statue here standing here where the Buddha sitting, upright, strong alert, what happens when a Buddha meets another Buddha? What happens if two people are sitting facing each other that way and meet each other? We're not leaning again towards each other, not leaning away, but being balanced, centered present for each other, and maybe seeing each other. What happens in that encounter? What's it like? So in the Zen tradition, they talk about this as what's called face to face meetings, sometimes called face to face transmission and part of the what happens in a an In Zen training, is that the student and the teacher are supposed to not talk about necessarily students problems and neurosis. You know? And how do I find a job and my mother doesn't like me. You know, these are all very important issues. Of course not to belittle them. But I don't think when Buddhists sit facing each other Buddha, the Buddha, they ask each other, you know, you know, why I problems with my mom, you know, she's, you know, just always worried about what she thinks about me and I can't seem to get a good job. What should I do? I don't think they do that. And you know, maybe they, I can touch on my

image of Buddha versus Buddha meeting Buddha. And the, if you allow me to digress a little bit, said, okay, there's a footnote interlude There's a famous story of the meeting of

I think it was maybe I think was Kobe some of you might know the story of color rubbish. I think it was a very famous Tibetan teacher. And I think it was some sign him a very famous Korean Zen teacher. And they happen to run into each other at the airport. And there was a nice encounter, I think, or maybe it was a conference, I don't know. And in Zen style that, you know, they were meeting these two great realize people, but they came from very different Buddhist cultures, different kind of understanding of Buddhism and all that. So the Zen Master, I guess, was going to challenge the Tibetan master. So he held up in orange and he said, What is this? Teacher kind of look didn't scratch his head and turn toward the translator and tried to explain and finally said they don't have orange. Orange in Korea. Have oranges in Korea. So sometimes we sometimes we miss each other in the meeting. But so part of you know, the Zen training is also when you meet with a teacher is to see if you can meet the teacher. Not exactly like an equal, but immediate teacher as it. Having done that your work where you have dropped your attachments, ways you're stuck in self identity, worries, greed spheres, and just kind of meet with a completely clear and open heart to really quickly clear and open mind just there with someone. And it's a task of the teacher to be able to meet you there. Also, and it takes work from the teacher to and one teacher I had I was great. It was such a great person for me to train with like that and I worked on that and worked on that until I decided I don't think he's capable. And that was never going to happen really, it's always going to be he's always holding himself as the teacher. And you have to let go of teacher. And you have to go to student in order to have this kind of this kind of meeting. One of the teachers and teachers I had, we had this wonderful encounter. I've been away from Zen center for a while. And I came back and so he took me for a walk and we were just talking about him. He was asking me about my intentions, what was going on for me and, and because he was one of my primary teachers, he was wondering now that I'm back, you know, what was it what was my connection going to be to him was like planning to continue practice within training with him working with him, whatever. It was a nice question. It was nice. It was it he was interested. So in the context of that conversation, he asked me what I thought about him. And I said to him that I trusted him completely as a person, but i don't i don't i don't know if i could really agree with his understanding of Buddhism. I know if I can really just, you know, agree with his dharma. You know, that's a big thing to say right to your Zen master. You know, you're okay with your dharma. And so he stopped in his tracks if you stop right there on the sidewalk, and he turned towards me, he was really, you know, and he looked at me and he said, he went like this. And he said, right there is where we'll meet. He put his hands together, we'll meet right there, where we disagree. wasn't that great? That's where we can meet. And so that was an invitation to disagree. And to bring that to him and talk about it. But the idea that there's a meeting there, in the difference, meeting there and you know, places where we didn't agree. And what's that meeting like? We have to always agree with someone to meet them. What's it like to really be present and really have an encounter with someone or two people feel like they meet each other. In the differences, but also in their sameness? And how often do we allow ourselves to really meet someone else and encounter someone? Or even if they can't meet us? Do we stop and really give a chance for that meeting? Do we see any importance in meeting someone in this kind of clear way? It's, I think, find it interesting that some people are very eager to sit and meditate and be peaceful and let go their attachments and, and maybe be you know, have some wonderful state. But it doesn't occur to them to do that when they're with other people. Those people but why not? The line between your heart the line in your heart between meditation and your ordinary life meditation and the way that you relate to other people, is a rather arbitrary line. There's no real line to your soul the same in a sense, you know, and so if you're interested in the purity of heart that can come period Mind that can come in meditation, I think sooner or later you should be interested in that purity of heart in relationship to other people.

And so I said, you know, this idea of no separate self is as sometimes been an explanation of no self in Buddhism or not self, I think kind of misses the misses an opportunity misses something there, because it emphasizes, you know that we're all connected all the time. But if we're always connected, then perhaps we can't meet. There's no meeting if you're separate. I mean, no, there's no meeting. If you're already united, there's meeting if you're different, and separate. And there's something very significant that can happen when two people meet each other with some kind of inner strength, or, or capacity, where they allow themselves to be different, without being without having, being self conscious about their own identity as being different. It makes some sense. So we're often we're caught up in our day. who I am and who I am in relationship to someone else. But what if we let go of that. But still, we're different. And someone else let's go over their self identity, but they're different. And then the difference is we meet each other. And sometimes we actually see and understand someone better when we see how they're different from us. And sometimes we see someone really well and we see how the same from from us. And we have the capacity to do both. And is there some way that you only really know yourself? When you're when you see someone else as another? If you see someone else's being non separate from you, do you can you really meet yourself? And what does it mean to meet someone else's another in a respectful, clear and liberated way? And what's it like to be on your end or that meeting in a clear, liberated way, I think is a very interesting topic to explore and it's something like in My training in Buddhism was something I slowly worked out to discover what's this, like how to do this? And how to do this? And what happened? You know what goes on inside of me that stands in the way of being able to do that? What do I have to let go of and until you know that meeting can happen.

What you see in the teachings of the Buddha was he didn't want to define liberation, or even oneself from any category of self. And so if you know you don't think in terms of self, so for him, there was no idea that there's a self to hold separate. There was a health there was self that was supposed to merge the self they're supposed to be one with anything, or self. They're supposed to be two with anything. But what happens if you drop all those categories and Then meet with someone else. You can't say your merge and you can't say you're separate, neither different nor the same. So that's the challenge that some people like to take. And, and in some in this, like in the Zen tradition, they talk about it being Buddha, meaning Buddha, Buddha to Buddha, Buddha to Buddha. And, and they say in Zen sometimes that somehow, your liberation, your enlightenment, is not complete, until you can do that in the world with other people. And so generally it's done with, you know, so that's one of the places they'd mostly do it anyway, with in some ways with Zen teacher where there's this real meeting, sometimes called mind to mind meeting. It's a bit mysterious what that means. But but it mostly means that both people are free. And they recognize that freedom and each other when they meet so those are my thoughts for today. I hope none of you now start coming up to me with deep eye stares and looking at me, you know and try to meet me You know, it has to be kind of natural, you know? You know it's like Don't try too hard please give you a headache. But what are your thoughts now in reaction response? Maybe somebody you have a different opinion you'd like to differ with me and we could meet there are some questions or comments or

I guess what I hear what you're saying are we kind of what I think is that we're with me when I say that we're all connected. We're connected on a lower level like certainly just as an entity. realm, or, you know, in in nature. But I see that we're all that would be, I'd look at things as levels. And I would say that would be the lowest level. And then as a level up would be that we do, there are differences, you know, or height or color. And then certain habits and traits that we have and how advanced we are in the Dharma. So I see that we're kind of both in a way, we're all connected, and we're all the same. But then ways we're all separate and how far along we are in the Dharma. But I think it's nice to think that we are all connected in the base, beautiful, so both connected and separate, depending on what part of our lives we look at. Thank you.

Yeah, I'm curious to hear some of your thoughts, your reaction your reactions to this. These ideas

I'm just curious if you were able to continue your relationship with the teacher that you had who made that comment?

Because I feel like so many relationships once a conflict like that is established people decide to act

in fact go their separate ways. And the one who said I'll meet you there exactly. I know we started many years of meeting regular basis. And you know, we worked closely very closely together for about three, four or five years.

Thank you. That was a very interesting and provocative talk. I. I found it interesting in my life, I don't know how many opportunities I've had to meet Buddha to Buddha, but I found it quite interesting when I'm in that space of being open hearted and free I'm meeting somebody who may not be coming from that same place, but the whole tenor of our interaction is different and certainly better for me. I don't know really how it is for them, but it's certainly better for me to not bring all my garbage as it were to the interaction.

Great, thank you. Sometimes I'm, I'm, I surprise myself that, you know, I'm going shopping in the supermarket or something, I'm caught up in my world and preoccupations or whatever is going on, right. And then I come to the checkout counter, and it occurs to me to not be concerned about the price, you know, whatever. I'm concerned about the National Enquirer there. But, but to lift my head up and really look at the teller. And every once in a while, there's a there's a clerk there who meets me, and there's a whole different, you know, like, Oh, you know, it's no longer checkout and food and groceries. It's like, these are two people meeting And, you know, there's usually a smile or some acknowledgement of each other's humanity or something. And it's quite beautiful to do that, and sometimes it's very simple experience. Like, I don't know what's going on the other person, but, you know, it certainly is very refreshing for me to kind of wake up from my little trance of shopping. Whatever I'm preoccupied with. Yes. Oh, yes. Can you use the mic, please?

Well, that's very interesting. I don't know if everybody knows that Constantinos market is closing. And I've gone there for a long, long time, and I know now that they're closing, the food I eat is going to be different, but something I learned there was

Well, anyway, One reason I'm sad is it's like losing a family. Yes, I'm really interacted with a lot of the people. And you know, when you harass somebody and they harass back but you're both laughing that kind of stuff. And it's, it's gonna be a big part of my life Don't miss Yeah, what a free one when they see me coming you know they'll say something or I'll say something and it's just open. Yeah, I don't know I don't think it's the same thing for not beating each other with Buddhism, but I know there's a way to contact with people just with the humor. I mean my life without laughing because I'm an old lady now and you know if you get Be an old lady. Without humor is

lovely. So I'm sorry for your loss. I mean, that's like losing family. Sometimes you've you've known them for a long time. And within one of the things you might think of doing is before. Let's wait. Okay, put it in enough duck. So you're ready. I'm sorry for your loss. It can be quite a loss to lose something as part of your neighborhood and your connection you've had for a long time. And do you plans Okay. Good. Okay. Let us know how they go. Yes.

I really appreciate those comments because I find it almost easier to meet See the humanity in perfect strangers, then sometimes the people that you know best are those relatives.

Exactly, you

know, and I have like those.

And I'm in a funny place in my practice where

I start, like kind of the person said that I feel like I'm coming from a very open minded, open hearted when those buttons start getting pushed. And I've just practiced enough so that I can see where they're coming from. But I'm also this funny place where I judge them for it, you know, it's like, if you could just let go, but of course, like it, I totally see what's happening, but I, I guess I should practice more on how to pull but uh, how do

you have any advice for those?

Well, I think it's meaningful to remember there's an old cliché that says something like, no one's a saint with their own family. And, you know, so You know, you could just really hard did that kind of context. But you might also if you're close enough to some of the people in the family, to ask them if there are ways that you can be, if you're with them to meet, when you're upset with him when you're angry, you know, how can I approach you and I'm angry in a way that works for you. And, and they say, well, don't criticize me. And you just tell me you're angry. And maybe, you know, maybe, for example, and then maybe there's a chance to meet, you know, but if you tell if you're criticizing them, then you know that you're, you're being offensive, and then they have to be defensive. But if you keep it to yourself and say, I'm angry, there's then and keep it to yourself, then perhaps if they're, you know, mature enough around this, they don't, they won't get defensive, and then they can somehow meet you and your anger.

I actually do you have a tendency to hold back so much that I start choking so that I can't even Don't get offensive, but I just pulled back all together so I can't communicate at all. It's like just the wallet, Steve

you should look for, you should look for an opportunity for someone that you trust well enough. And ask the ask permission and all that, or someone, maybe sometimes people do this with therapists, that's the functional therapist, and half the function of therapists is, is to go and find someone that you can let your anger and frustration out on and experiment see what that's like. Rather than always holding it in, and if you get let it out a little bit, maybe you'll start by letting it out. You can start then from that point of view and figure out how to change it. It'll been to find out how to do it in a wise way rather than bottling it up. But if you if you've never done it before, then you don't have the street smarts to know how to do it wisely. make some sense. kill someone recently did that She had a problem with anger. And I said, Oh, yeah, I'm a good person for you to get angry with when you come here and get angry with me. So I thought, you know, I could offer that to her. Not you know, I don't know you well enough to know I should offer that to you.

We had a complicated history, so there was maybe some reason for it, but I see the mic there. Yeah.

Sometimes if I know I'm about to meet someone, I'll just stop for a moment, do a couple of loving kindness phrases, you connect to something larger and sort of gin up this spirit of kindness, kindness,

and I find recently it's done. Just works really well. It kind of puts a smile on my face and other people will respond beautiful, very positively skewed.

Thank you.

I'm curious to hear about more than just the meeting but the going on. So meaning to me is just like the thirst to meet anything, are they going but

then you said, like you and your teacher would have different opinions. Or if you take a Republican and a Democrat and they, they can't they meet, but you know, this goes on. So as you continue with them, I gather that you're saying you keep this going, you stay present, you stay with the same thing that you started with, whatever it is,

it's vague, but yet you stay present. You mean sometimes you stay present, you engage. You agree to disagree, or you engage and hang in there and, and talk about what's going on.

So it's more than just meeting it's basically a whole way of being with someone who you don't agree with.

Again, it can be yes. Thank you. I remember how surprised I was surprised. I was in, in college. You know, I kind of grew up in this kind of, you know, liberal household and democratic kind of household and atheist household. And then I had I was assigned this chemistry chemistry lab, this woman to be my chemistry lab partner. And he was a fundamentalist Christian Republican. Like he was like, so, you know, so like, out of, you know, out of this world for me, I mean, who Where did you find people like that? You know, so and so for him. It was so foreign for my world, my little narrow world that I live in, right. And, and I was so surprised what a beautiful woman she was. And we had this great rapport. And I it was such an eye opening to me that I could have such a close good relationship with someone who At first I thought that I would, you know, not get along with at all because I thought that we were so different or something I disagree with so much. And that opened me up a lot to be able to meet People and not see them through these labels that we often see people through.

So far we've talked about face to face meetings. Now, you alluded to the fact that there are a lot of people out there listening worldwide who will never get the opportunity to make face to face here. And an interesting insight on that, for me was after listening to many talks, but having no idea what the people look like, you started putting photos up on the web of the various speakers. And I had then realized I'd built preconceptions in my mind about what you will look like you were and suddenly these pictures popped up wasn't anything at all like what I'd imagined and build on. And I've been very fortunate in having business bring me here occasionally to be able to make people and see the IMC. But there are a lot of meetings go on where you don't see the other person Including our all work and books. Now, from time to time you read a series of books, and it's obvious that this person and that person is an eminent person, and I really should read them and I should study them. And I do and I build up my interpretations of them from the word. Sometimes I feel there's a meeting there. And yes, I agree with that. And that's well written, and that's a good book, and sometimes not. And could you just mention the challenges of self education where you're not in contact with the people and quite remote and some of the ways of addressing the difficulties that can bring in other words, keeping a steady Ma and not putting too many personal interpretations on the things you reading and hearing and even seeing on video sometimes.

think that's a great topic. Bringing up it seems like it's a big one to talk about in a few minutes here. But what occurs to me, if I may just kind of pick one point out of it is that if you are practicing Buddhism or listening to the Dharma online or reading books, and you don't then have a, you know, direct connection with the teacher, the writer or the speaker, you don't see them you don't have that living connection, then that's okay. Because then what you do is you practice that limit connection to the people that you are direct touch with. So your neighbors, colleagues, relatives, you you you kind of practice there and try to find a way to meet them in a more realistic, deeper way more full way. And, and then you won't need to come back to IMC. though we'd love to see you again. So everyone,

I hope I hope

this was more provocative. than not, so it gave you something to think about and challenge you and as you go about with your, you know those those times when you encounter Other people may those encounters be meaningful for you and everyone. Thank you.