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SPEAKERS

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Good evening, everyone, then that can you hear all right? No one. Okay. So there's been a long custom in Buddhism for Buddhist practitioners to have teachers and teachers have had a very important role for offering guidance for offering. feedback for reflection for teachings are many things. And but one of the goals of teachers is to help you not need the teachers anymore. So to, to meet up and then doing so becoming your own teacher. And between the kind of between those two, between having a teacher and becoming your own teacher, there is something that can be your teacher that's very effective, very useful. And that is your sense of ease. That whatever sense of ease that you know, can become your teacher, it can teach you a lot can teach you a lot about yourself. And it can challenge you, in great wit wonderful ways. And it's a wonderful debating partner, you can now talk about that a little bit today, you can debate with ease, and chances are as you'll lose the debate. So he is one of the most succinct ways of thinking about ease, as a Buddhist practice is some instructions that Buddhist monk named Ajahn Amaro like to give he was an Englishman who lived here in California for many years. And his most simple instructions for meditation are to set yourself at ease to whatever degree that you can. And then notice what takes you away from it. That's it. So the notice what takes you away, helps you to see a lot about yourself. And you get to see what's probably very important to understand, because a lot of the wisdom, way of being a teacher really understand something in the Buddhist teaching, is to understand something about yourself. And to understand how you get caught how you get caught up in attachments and clinging and fear and aversion, and ambition and desire and conceit and self aggrandizement, self diminishment, all the kind of games of self. So to become familiar how this works, and not a few people who come to like Buddhism, are interested in the wonderful wonderfulness of practice they're looking for. You know, sometimes you're looking for great enlightenment, they're looking for wonderful spiritual experience experiences, they're looking for joy. They're looking for deep, concentrated states, all this kind of the good stuff kind of answered those certainly has a role in practice. But in pursuing that many people are blinded from really understanding themselves, and really understanding how they their operating system of how we get caught. And a wise person in the Buddhist teachings, is intimately familiar with all the tricks of the mind, all the little ways and big ways that we get tripped up, we get caught. We get fixated by all kinds of things. And so this instructions, notice what takes you away from the ease, allows the ease to be a mirror to help you see yourself more clearly what you're actually doing. And it might be quite surprising if you do this regularly through the day to see what it is that trips you up. Where does your mind go? Where does it get stuck?

If a wonderful place to do this is on retreats, because then people are kind of paying attention all day long, or much of the day. And people start noticing patterns that they sometimes don't notice in ordinary daily life because we're kind of half the time distracted in data. Life, you're not really paying attention, but really noticing what's going on. And one of the things that some people notice is how much fear there is in their mind, and how much fear is operating. Sometimes they notice it's an underlying

prevalent kind of foundation for everything else that they do. However, they don't really notice it because it's so deep, and they're so distracted and caught up in what's on the surface. Some people will notice how much selfing there is, how much there's constant concern about me, myself and me, myself, me myself in mind. And I saw that when I was in Japan, I practice in a monastery there for a while. And I was learning Japanese when I was there. And so I dropped Japanese was rudimentary, but I had to speak Japanese because there was no one to speak English to in the monastery. And so in Japanese, it's very rare to use pronouns. So, you know, you don't say, you know, I'm going, you say going. And so in the context of the situation, you understand that I'm going you're going they're going to just easily say going and the people somehow understand the context. And so it kind of makes sentences a little bit simpler than English where we add the water, you know, I I'm going there is a way of saying I am going. But in English, we say it, you know, with one syllable I in Japanese, you need three syllables. And a preposition. So which is another syllable, so four syllables, and it goes, goes, by the way watashi, WA. So if you want to say I'm going to say Watashi wa, de que mas. So it's kind of a mouthful. Well, I, you know, I was learning how to speak Japanese. And so I tried to speak it like you speak English. And so it was a such a strong instinct, for me habit to use the eye word, because in English, we use it all the time. And so I would start, you know, most of my sentences, sentences with watashi, WA. And the Japanese bunks, you just kind of got a bit strange to edit, because it started to sound really strange for me how often I was doing it. And I became acutely aware of how much my speech was oriented around me and myself in mind. But you could also become aware of that, in your mind, how much your thoughts orient around me myself in mind. Now, some of that just fine, and it's innocent enough. But some of it is probably a little bit over preoccupation with self. And I suspect that a fair number of people, if they really kind of kept the statistics, you know, kept count of what they're thinking about. They find it a very high percentage of them are self centered in ways which are not so exemplary. And so, when more importantly, for this exercise of ease, look at your ease, and then notice what takes you away from it, is you'll discover that it's concerned about self that sometimes trips us up, we lose our sense of ease because of it. Someone says something, and our mind starts making a story about what that means. And as we tell that story, then it's about me myself in mind, we get all excited. I've, you know, I've had situations where I was sitting mindfully minding my own business. And there was a something like a sound or something happened, or just something, I don't know what even what happened to my mind. But I remember a college girlfriend, you know, from over 40 years ago. And she said, I said she did. And I should have said, Why didn't I say How could she do it to me. And you know, just like, I fall into it. And as I do it, I feel my mind contract, feel the heat go up. And it's all thoughts about me myself in mind. And you know, that I'm still kind of living out, you know, so many years later.

So, put yourself in some modicum of ease, and then notice what takes you away from it. And try to look at that in a compassionate way. Try to look at that with kindness. And just matter of fact, this, this is how it is then, you know, as opposed to taking it personal, but I'm such a terrible person or I'm such a great person, to Oh, this is what's happening. The mind lost my ears and This is why, and this ability to keep your ears when you see bad news in yourself, things that you don't like, is one of the great doorways to becoming a free. So you see something about yourself, you know, you see that you're conceited, you're overly preoccupied or that you're easily angered or your fill of fulfilled with lust and greed or something. And rather than being upset with it and losing more ease, that is to be very be content, to be honest about it and see it clearly. And in that contentment, to see it clear that this is what's going on, keep your ears stay in a sense of ease. And so we're constantly using ease as a reference point, come back. And it doesn't have to be dramatic ease. But it just means a little bit more than what you have, you know what you're having just kind of relax. So it can be just taking a deep breath, and exhaling and relaxing, it can mean taking 30 seconds to close your eyes, and breathe and just be present. It could mean looking around, and that where you are, especially if you're in a spacious place, and have your eyes wander around in this spacious place and look at the space and begin seeing how there's a lot of space

to hold our thoughts. One of the sources of one of the forms of stress is when the mind gets cluster phobic, when there's just too many thoughts spinning around, it's all contracted and caught up. And sometimes to look around is a way of making more space in the mind to hold all the things that are going on. And it can create a sense of ease. Relaxing somewhere that tense muscles is very helpful in relaxing the belly, the shoulders, the jaws, not speaking too quickly. Sometimes just taking a you know, not rushing to speak. It's sometimes a lot of stress gets built up. When we feel compelled to speak and we speak. Sometimes it's actually better not to just necessarily stay silent. But to wait and take a moment to breathe and be with yourself. It kind of keeps more ease. The other thing that's fascinating about ease as a reference point as a teacher, for you, for us, is if you have a modicum of ease, and you're going about your day. And something happens. Where ordinarily, you would lose your ease. You get excited, agitated, upset, alarmed, or something happens. So you notice that's happening, you're losing your ease. And then ask yourself the question. Is this necessary? Is it necessary to lose my ease? Is it what is it that I believe is so important that I'm willing to sacrifice my years. And so this is, but this is where the debate comes in. And this is where you get to really kind of use your intelligence and your reflection and contemplation to really consider you losing you ease. Why are you doing that? Why is this so important? Why is it more important to lose your ease than to keep it? What is it so important that you'll sacrifice your use for so you're driving along on the freeway, and you're maybe quite at ease, nice day, not too much traffic. And someone comes along and cuts in front of you way too close. So it's alarming, you know, it's a little bit frightening, which is normal. But then you start noticing you're getting all hot and agitated. And you start ready to put you know, you know the person's already solid situations already safe. But you're ready to honk your horn and do something interesting with your finger. And you know, and so, why, why is important, so you've lost your ease. Why sacrifice your ease? For someone who cut you off? If you've managed to get safe again? What are you trying to accomplish? Is it worthwhile sacrificing your is giving it up?

For the sake of you know, somehow doing creative things with your finger through this person you're dropping by. We know why. What is more important. So I don't want to you know, you probably imagine what I think is the answer. So, you know, I apologize for that little bit, just a little bit. But, but the point if you're going to be your own teacher is to engage in that questioning process. Really don't Don't just act on automatic impulse, as if it's, you know, right thing to do. But question it, debate it. You know, yes, it's really important when someone cuts you off to, you know, for the next minute, all your horn down and you know, and yell out the window, it's, you know, and not noticing anything else you're doing driving that terrible person, you know, is that really that important? So this was just maybe a silly example. But you can probably think of many more throughout the day, where you lose your your, your your peace. And then there's other things that happen, you know, in a large scale, like politics, many people lose their ease, or there's family tragedies that happen. And you know, and produce, we lose our ease. A friend of mine, who was a hospice nurse told me once that there would come a point and caring for a patient. That is the process of dying in the hospice, that she would go to the family members and say to the family, from now on, there's not going to be any more crisis. And crisis meant that everyone got alarmed, and something has to be done, it's terrible thing has to happen. It's a natural process at some point to die. And so at some point in the hospice process, the person kind of turned the corner. And it was clear that they were on their way out. And so the way she helped the family was say, there's no more crisis anymore. No other reason to get alarmed, you're all excited, we just stay calm, stay, keep her us and stay present for it and support the person the best we can. I think it's a remarkable thing. Because the instinct is to get get alarmed, or to do whatever we can, you know, to fix the person. The so this is getting alarmed by all kinds of things. And not a few people these days get alarmed by things that you're probably not going to have much, you know, impact whether you get alarmed or not. You know, just, you know, probably does it really serve you to serve the world to get alarmed. And some people get hysterical and all kinds of things that happen. Just before I came down here, my wife showed me a video that was biggest made today, like yesterday, I don't know when it was last last few

days. In, in Dallas, of there is a small group of African Americans protesting the killing of black people, by police. What's happening these days all over the country. And they were on one side of the street. And the other side of the street came counter protesters, white people, young white men, and pickup trucks, full of flags, American flags and Confederate flags. And they were, they were saying all lives matter, which is true. But it also diminishes the tremendous disparity of suffering that goes on and has gone on for centuries here in this country. And so this was a setup for tension, right. And so the, there's a kind of a homemade video what's going on and, and the African American few, a couple African American men looks like they're consulting or something and, and they shake hands, like happily with each other. And then, and then they walk across the street, as a group, the whole group of maybe 20, or something. And they walk over to the group and maybe 10 white guys, and they give each other hugs, and all lives matter. And they can see the child hugs and talk and they're like best friends, like it was quite remarkable to watch. And then some point, the whole little encounter was going to end I guess, and the old little kind of huddled with hands over their shoulders going like the football players or something. And one of one of them did a prayer. But what was most remarkable was a police officer who was there kind of in charge of keeping the public safety in this kind of situation. And by that time, the police officer joined them in a huddle. So I'm telling your story now by ease, because African Americans who decided to cross the street in way looked in the video, they deliver tremendous ease.

It was I think they eat it was the ease in which they did it. That made it maybe possible for this kind of, you know, heartless kind of meeting to happen. Or then there's a photograph maybe many of you have seen now of African American woman in Baton Rouge, who seems like she's totally composed and at ease, standing. They're very centered and dignified where their feet firmly on this road with a very light dress. Kind of because hot the guests down there and very light kind of flowing dress, she looks almost like she shouldn't be, I don't know what it's almost like almost archetypical the way she's standing there, it looks like she has her eyes closed, and she looks like completely at ease and peaceful present. And these two police officers with full riot gear on walking towards are a couple of feet away from her ready to grab her to rescue her. And the contrast was so dramatic. And be here someone's standing there with ease in a situation where she was protesting but keeping her ease as opposed to yelling and screaming and doing anything else. For these for people like me, that sense of doing things like that with ease is much more powerful than other ways that we can do things. So, but what I wanted to make is, but there's many, many things to get excited about to get alarm get by going to steric buying. I want to offer you a suggestion, as you reflect on your loss of ease and your practice of ease, a suggestion to consider. And that is that one of the reasons we lose our ease is because we have a lack of self confidence. The more unconfident we are about our ability to be effective efficacious and the world that we live in, the more likely we are to lose our ease and get excited and concerned and alarmed. If we're confident that we can do something, there's no reason to get alarmed. Now, there's many things we can, you know, do solve in the big picture of things, but to have confidence that we can do what we can do. And if we can't do, there's no need to lose or calm about it. If we can't, if we can't do anything about something, is that a reason to lose our calm. If our imagination tells us that, whatever is happening is we predict that in the future is going to cause all kinds of problems. And there's a lot of fear. That fear also has something to do with a lack of confidence that we'll know how to take care of ourselves in the future, do what we need to do. So you might disagree with me. And maybe it's not always true, what I'm saying. But I think it's a very powerful reflection is to consider if part of the reason we lose our ease is comes from a lack of confidence. And if that's the case, where is your confidence? What do you have confidence in how does one have confidence? What's the role of confidence in helping us keep our use. And confidence has a lot to do with being able to do, being at ease doesn't mean that we become passive. I hope that I don't, I hope that's not the case, you know, or in different. And so then finally, this thing about ease. Ease is when you tune in to the sense of ease or calm or peace that can exist for us, even if it's a small amount. If you really tune into it, and notice what takes you away, you probably

discover a trail, a path that opens up for you to deeper and deeper levels of peace, deeper and deeper levels of ease. And so you kind of sniff your way your feel your way to the east to the east, as you do. So, you'll find ways in which you start veering off to the left and the right. Oh, no, not that. But stay in school, watch the whole process, watch the ways you leave it. Question it. Watch where you really feels good to be where it feels satisfying or meaningful. And with time I hope is you'll discover that you're much better off being at ease that you're wiser, more creative. You're more effective in the world, all kinds of goodness can come from ease.

And one of the things that is kind of get a sense of part of this goodness that can come from a sense of ease. Is comes from letting our mindfulness be strong in noticing what's happening inside of us. As we sit and practice as we are to notice that notice the immediacy of what happens in our body. Be really mindfulness is a lot about body fullness. So really notice the effect, the consequence it has on our psychophysical system, when we act one way or another way when we feel one way. Or another way. When we have reaction one way or Another way, we get alarmed or free stay at ease. There's there's the movement of fight or flight. The opposite of that is approach and sooth. Isn't that kind of nice? approaching Sue? So how are we so into notice the effect that has on us. And it's possible to notice a kind of in your brain, the feelings of hell, and healing, and well being that can come when we think in ways of ease and positively. And it's possible to feel the opposite the sense of contraction and tightness and kind of stress that happens in the brain, when we start thinking thoughts that are not so useful, then are kind of stressful thoughts. And to watch, you know, it happens to watch what kind of thoughts you have. And to feel the effect it has on you physiologically is a very important piece of information. Because then maybe it becomes less interesting to have the thoughts that harm you. And more interesting to have hot thoughts that benefit you that support you. And ease is one of those kind of signposts or guides to help you move in the direction of kind of a way of being in the world that is actually nourishing for psychophysical system. That necessarily ease itself is always so nourishing, but it's kind of like makes a space for room for some of the more the better aspects of our psyche, to our heart to come forward. Ease creates room for what's good enough to come forth. This ease unease tightens up the space creates cluster for cluster phobic kind of feeling in the mind. And index. When things are tight in the mind. There's a lot of friction. And friction is what produces a lot of the negative reactivity that we have. more space, less reactivity, more space, less reactivity, less space, more reactivity. So ease, ease as your teacher. And I'm pretty confident that if you really take this on as a teacher, and then you reflect on it think and get familiar with it takes a while to learn what it is. For some people, it takes a while to even recognize what does he mean by ease and the kind of confused there's a story that's told in our past in the world of a woman who was on retreat. And during the every couple of days in the retreat, there's a meeting with the teacher to talk about the practice. And this woman said, you know, some I feel something really strange. I'm not sure what it is. But it feels kind of odd. It feels different, different is strange to me. And the teacher, kind of a typical teacher way said, well just go back and keep looking at it. Keep investigating, see what it is. A couple of days later, the woman came back and said, I discovered what it is. I was calm. And I've never come I never I never really knew what calm was. So you know, it was such a strange feeling she didn't recognize because it was such a foreign thing to her. So it can be foreign ease and calm and a sense of inner peace can be a strange thing for us. But it might take a while to get a hang of it. And then as you get the hang of it, too, then it takes a while to get the hang of how to use it as your teacher how to use it as a guide, how to stay close to it, how not to sacrifice it so easily. Stay present with it and stay with it and learn to act in the world with your ease. It's where it's really wonderful and worthwhile.

So, that's what I had to offer today. Do we have about 10 minutes? If any of you would like to ask any questions or would like to champion unease? offer a cash offer a counter view. You're welcome. I saw this hand here first if you can, you can.

Thank you. Um, one of the things that I've struggled with a lot in the past both of my practice and the rest of my life is I think when I was growing up, I had very quiet or self control. family. And so we just didn't express a lot of emotion, you know, and, and so either we were, you know, very calm or stoic or things like that, or we were even maybe suppressing a lot of emotion. And I don't think that's particularly healthy either. But I don't think that's what you're saying you should do. Like, you're not saying that you should suppress feeling or be on feeling. So I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the difference between being at ease and suppressing things?

Yeah. First, I just want to say that different individuals, different families, different cultures, societies have a different ways of being when expressing emotion. And we want to be a little bit careful not to say one is better than the other, that there are some they're more expressive, and some and less, and there's just different ways of being. But certainly, I think being repressed or held down or not being truthful, what's going on, can be very damaging both to itself, and also to our relationships in the long term. And that's why I think any mindfulness can be very helpful, because part of the instructions from like mindfulness meditation is, is to give full permission for us to be whatever we are at the moment, and to really feel what's there. And it's one of the safest places in the world, to let murderous rage course through us, and be okay with it. You know, or be really afraid or be whatever is going on. And to make space for it and learn how we block it, learn how we inhibit learn how we might repress it, and even not be truthful to ourselves about it, at least in that environment to let it flow. And then when we when we aren't, once we have a sense of what that's like and know ourselves really well, because we're seeing a seeing all the things, we're learning how to be at ease in the middle of our strong emotions, or as opposed to being at ease at the expense of or pushing them pushing them down. So we kind of like making space for them to be there, then you might understand yourself better, and well enough, that you may be able to make much better choices about how to be with your emotions outside of meditation, or what you know, in social situations. And there are some situations where maybe it's better to keep them to yourself. It's just more harmonious. And if you grew up in a family system where, you know, they didn't express emotions, they don't know how it's kind of foreign to them. Maybe it doesn't serve this serve the family much to for you to kind of be much more expressive, and maybe that should be done somewhere else. Or maybe it does serve them maybe it really helps everyone kind of to break the ice. And somewhere to kind of sit down to look is I'm having all these feelings here. And I feel like I can't usually say what they are. And, you know, would it be nice after all these years? You think we could sit there a bit and I can share a little bit what I've been having said for all these years? And maybe they say yes. So hopefully we're wiser mean, and we're able more and, and through the mindfulness practice, we learn how not to be taken over by the emotions. We can allow them to course through us freely, but they're not in charge of us. Kind of we're we're in the driver's seat. But the kids are yelling in the backseat. And there's that dancers sufficient? Are you and ask more.

It's something to think about. But I'll let other people ask questions.

Great. So this man here.

I think you sort of answered my question, but I'll ask anyway, just to go into the details of this particular motion. What do you how do you work with when you lose your ease to involuntary contractions, like, say, anxiety or something that shows up? And it just shows up?

Yeah, good, good. Good, thank you for that. I think it's important not to listen to what I had to say and, and think that somehow that you failed, you're supposed to rush back to the ease and, you know, like, I guess get back into ease, you know, or Mikey, I can't come to IMC anymore, because I'm so anxious

would be at ease all the time. The basic mindfulness thing is to, is to bring mindfulness to that anxiety. And if you can, I can, might be helpful to the idea that you're trying to be at ease with the anxiety, not at ease, in spite of the anxiety, but at ease with it being there. And that kind of makes space for you to look at it, feel it be with it. It also makes space for the you're kind of like stepping away a little bit from, from the anxiety in a sense, from being the anxiety that's kind of feeding it and continuing the stories and the ideas of going there. And kind of making space to see it and allow it to kind of unfold without us fueling it. So it makes sense. So it could be any anxiety we have deserves our respect and our care. It's not a it's not a mistake. It's part of the path to open to it and to feel it and to make space and just feel it and bring to it. And one of the great ways, both literally and also metaphorically, the idea of doing meditation is very helpful. And that you sit down in meditation and, and just make lots of space to really be present and feel it. And hopefully not to get caught up in it inspire a lot of, you know, into panic attacks, but to feel it. So that kind of begins to kind of not control the situation totally, but there's space for it and allow for it to feel within the body, metaphorically, in the sense that we're trying to be, you can also do that in daily life, it doesn't have to be meditation, we can maybe take a moment to, or a few moments just to feel what's going on, rather than being pushed around by the emotion. So it makes sense. Thank you, great. Someone else. A lot of men. And women don't have this issue. There were any issues here today. Okay, so I saw the hand over there, if you can move it.

So for a long time, I've made a very big effort not to express my anger in ways that are damaging, right? If I, if I feel I have an impulse or a reaction that's angry, I'll kind of try and sit with it and let it pass. But I ended up getting walked on a lot, what I end up getting kind of, sometimes I have maybe a little bit of trouble setting boundaries, because of that, I'll have an impulse to to lash out or to somehow defend myself.

So recently, I've been I mean, it's, it's just the situations have become what they are. And it has become too much. And I've started, you know, as a means of maybe setting some boundaries becoming very angry. And it's been very effective. sadly enough, in the short term, exactly, and I can definitely, I can feel it, the habit permeating the rest of my reactions, I can feel it becoming easier to become angry, and over smaller things. And I also feel a definitely a loss of ease. So what I what I would love to hear about is how you can be firm, and easy how you can how you can have integrity and work towards setting good boundaries, without, you know, going to a place that's scary or angry or, or something like that.

Yeah, they generally, I believe when people are angry, the problem, the primary problem problem with anger is just hostility that might be with it. And so still, it causes a lot of damage, it can be effective. But one of the most dramatic stories I have in my life of seeing how being firm and strong was kind of productive was when raising my kids. And I have every one so very rarely. But sometimes my older son, I used my strong voice. And that got his attention. And you know, it was some behavior that was just kind of out of, you know, unacceptable, and you had this had somehow stop. So I decided to get my strong voice to stop it. So good that that's effective parenting, just a strong voice in. And then one day I heard him use exactly the same voice and his younger brother. I said, Oh, no. What have I done. So I, so the Then one day, I tried to do another way I tried, he said to him, I told him, if you continue doing what you're doing, I'm gonna get angry. And he stopped and he looked at me and said, You're already angry.

And then I wasn't angry anymore. So one of the things you might consider doing, which is I do also is when I'm angry, I try to not act on my anger. But I don't want to ignore the situation either. And if something needs to be done, and if I have the chance, I go for a walk. Something walks for me are really good when I'm angry. And I try to understand more deeply what is going on for me, what's the impact what's really happening for me, because I like to think of anger as a secondary emotion. And

there's something deeper going on that's more interesting, more important to notice. And for me, the primary two has been fear and hurt. And when I discover the fear and the hurt, then I can go back to the person and say, You know when you said that I'm really afraid or when you say that I feel really hurt and most people Stop for that, that changes the whole conversation very differently. So you're making I statements, whereas anger is often you making you statements. And so you make a nice team, you know, I feel really afraid. And I don't know, if I want to continue, or it's hard for me to continue, I don't know, make sense for me to keep doing this, I think I need to somehow create some boundaries here. And so you stated very explicitly, but if you make it more of an if statement and your needs, then there's less room for the person to get defensive, and they understand you better, and hopefully, they can kind of most people then will respond in a good way. If they don't respond in a good way. That's good information to have. Because then you know, what you're up against. And then probably being angry wouldn't, you know, been so effective either. And so then maybe have to think some other strategy and then figure out what to take care of yourself. So that's just means a lot to be said. But that's that, okay. Yeah, thank you. Okay. So it's almost time. So unless there's a woman who would like to say something

okay. So

So if anything I've said this evening makes you uneasy. You can do one of two things, maybe many things but two things occurred to me. You could either be curious and investigate what's going on for you? And what's going on what you're responding to what I said debate it to consider it reflect on it and maybe you'll come out ahead maybe I'll I can learn something from you. The second thing you can do is whatever caused you unease just leave it here. Don't take it with you. And continue going about your life with Eddie's so thank you all very much.