

2016-10-10 Healing The World

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SPEAKERS

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So this evening, I would like to talk about the world from a Buddhist point of view, and the healing of the world. And we know we live in a world that has a lot of danger, a lot of anger, a lot of things that produce fear and dread in people's minds. And a lot of people are consumed with degrees of anger, degrees of fear, anxiety. And it's a difficult to sometimes live and reconcile what the emotions we have inside with the world around us, when we're afraid of what we see and hear and the world around us. When we're angry at what we see in the world around us. It's quite hard, sometimes very hard to live. And so how do we live in this world? How do we live in the world? So one of the interesting perspectives that comes from the Buddha is that when he used the word world, he specifically or most commonly referred to our psychophysical experience. And he says, explicitly, he said, what I refer to as the world is this Phantom long body here. So the solid body that we have, and what's inside in the mind, all that is the world in his book. And the so it used the word world a lot. But he wasn't necessarily talking about the external world, but the world of our experience, and includes recognition that the way that we know the world is not we don't really know the external world, we know the world through the medium, of how we experience it, how we see it, how we hear how we smell, how we touch. And from that we build up our story, our idea of the world. And Buddhism puts a tremendous emphasis or importance on the constructive role of the mind for understanding or building our sense or experience of the world. An example of this, that, for me is kind of striking. There's not a Buddhist example. But and that is that if there's a movie playing in a movie theater, but there's no one sitting in the theater, is the movie really happening on the screen? So that's the question. And the reason why it's an interesting question is that we know that what's actually happening on the screen is these projections of still shots, and the whole series of still shots all recovering very rapidly. And it just is still shots. If you slow down the film dramatically, you just get a shot, still shot, still shot is a little bit different, next month will be different. And the way that our brains are constructed, if an image goes, it's flashed frequently enough, we construct the motion in our heads, there's no motion on the screen. We construct it. So if there's no one in the movie theater, to see the movie, is there really a movie? And I would say there's no movie, the movie, what we call the movie, and actually where the movie comes from the word motion, right motion pictures, what the movie is that co created phenomena between you and the images on the screen. So this is a kind of similar idea in Buddhism, that the world that we experience is a co created event that has to do with how the sense data goes in, and we experience it and we live in it.

So with emotions, like fear and anger, particular desire and ambition and these things, they can be very uncomfortable. And they can be very energizing. And they can be part of constructing that relationship between us in the world or the world out there in the world in here. And we're often not innocent by standards, who just simply perceiving the world like it is It's a dangerous world. And we're everything that we're afraid of is a perfect, perfectly reasonable fear, given what's happening in the world. Everything we're anger, angry about in the world is perfectly reasonable. The world is a bad place, of

course. And no one's ever wrong in their anger, and for themselves. But there's this kind of just this co created phenomena. And that comes in, and we participate in it. And so when in the Buddhist approach to working with this world, and working with things like anger and fear, there's a strong desire or tendency to turn the lens around, not to look at the external world, but look at our world inside what's happening here for us. So if you look at anger, and fear, they tend to fuel thinking. And often, the things we're angry about are things that we're afraid of, are often a product of how we're thinking about things, the stories that we tell, the story says we've internalized stories that we've heard from the world around us, we tell ourselves a story. It might be accurate, it might not be. And we tell ourselves that story. And that's gives fuel to an emotion of anger, fear. And that, in turn, is fuel for the storytelling mind to tell more stories, to think and more. And if we think more anger, thoughts or fear thoughts, it becomes this loop, this spiral, this loop that goes around and around, and this feeds each other. And I think of it sometimes like a cat chasing its tail, spinning and spinning and spinning, it goes faster and faster and faster. Or another image that I like is that of a clown in the circus that wants to bend down and pick up a ball on the circus floor. But somehow, it seems like these clowns are kind of klutzy with their feet. And so they somehow kick the ball every time they bend down, step forward, and it goes a little bit further away, see if they'll go closer and they walk up to it and they bend down rest, they bend down, they kick it again, and they never get it. So sometimes where they're thinking, we're just like kicking the ball that we're chasing, trying to get something gets something, we're thinking about something. And it's a way that gets us spinning, when it's strong. Very often spinning about things which are outside of us, removed from us out there in the world. Sometimes people are angry with themselves or afraid of themselves. And oddly enough, in order for that to spin out as well, we're kind of treating ourselves as an external object. We've kind of objectify ourselves. And we're kind of like not in ourselves, we're kind of spinning around, losing ourselves in the process. And the image of kind of the losing our center and spinning outwards further and further away. In these thoughts, ideas. And some of these can be quite poisonous. Anger in particular can be a real poison. There was an article in today's news that they have done this, they studied some of the twila was 12,000 people or something. And they see that if you do strong exercise, vigorous exercise, when you're really upset, when you're really angry, you have three times the chance of getting a heart attack. So you know, be careful when you're angry, and you actually you know, that that anger puts a big stress on the heart. So it's kind of a poison, poison in sense that it's damaging and dangerous for us. It's can put it can feel sometimes a contraction, you can feel the stress and the mind, the energy, that tightness, the spinning, the loss of control, the loss of kind of any sense of

mastery over oneself. And that's part of the spinning of fear and anger is there's kind of often as a problem solving or retelling ourselves or trying to understand or trying to explain or trying to do something that doesn't really help and it's spins, spins, spins, keeps pushing the ball keeps chasing a tail you can't get and so we keep looking for something. So the Buddhist approach is to not look in the world out there but to heal ourselves first. To turn the attention around 180 degrees, to feel and sense what's happening here. And to be quiet, and attentive and feel and sense and just be. So meditation is an excellent place for this to do this. Meditation is kind of a stopping, we stopped chasing a tail, we stopped kicking the ball, we stopped committing ourselves to thinking, we stop investing ourselves in the stories that the mind is spinning and spinning and spinning. And we let that quiet down. It's not an easy thing to do. But to sit quietly, and be still helps a lot for many people. And then to breathe with it, to breathe with your anger, to breathe with your fear. And the study of breathing, the rhythm of breathing, staying with the breath coming and going, for some people is a wonderful way of not being so caught in the thoughts are so involved in the emotion. It's kind of keeps the mind soft and lubricated, has something else to do. Stay with the rhythm of breathing, feel it. And it's kind of like you're being washed with the breath, you breathe with the anger, imagine that it's like the waves going up and down the top, the way is going up and down across the shore, are these waves are just washing across, you're laying

in a nice kind of shallow lake and the waves are kind of washing over. And they're just washing through you cleansing you one breath at a time. But if you lose the breath, and get involved in your thoughts, then you can start spinning out again. We've come back to your breathing and try to stay with your breathing, then you start you stop feeding the thoughts. And if the thoughts are not fed, the emotions are not fed. And so to sit and let things quiet down to be to be cleansed. In repair a Buddhist word is purified. If you take anger as kind of a poison, then you have the poison quiets down. And this is can be something that's not easy to do. Sometimes people will take days, weeks, sometimes months, to sit with their strong emotions and feelings in order to sit quietly enough to let him dissipate. But then drain away, let them kind of wash wash away until we finally feel some peace and ease from being caught and consumed. And these strong feelings. Now there can be a strong protest that this is not appropriate to do. Because there are in fact real things in the world to be angry with. And real things in the world to be afraid of. And the argument can be that if I do this inner work of cleansing myself, of all this built up anger and fear and I have it, then I'm going to be living in the world unrealistically I'm not going to be motivated to do something, but what's going on what's wrong in the world I have to be you know, I have to get involved, I have to do something, we have to be angry, you know, the cause is just and we have to get out there and do something. And this kind of, you know, causes just have to go out and do something. Sometimes that's true. But if we're not careful how we do it, we end up leaving ourselves and spinning in the stories spinning in the ideas, and we lose touch with ourselves.

So the idea of cleansing ourselves of the emotions that build up and taking the time to do that, to empty them out, drain them out, wash them out of us, prepares us to be able to see the world in a clearer way to see it with less filters, filters of emotions, filters of, of stories, to have a clear direct connection to ourselves. So we can kind of be in touch with our heart rather than with our minds. If we're spinning in our thoughts are more in our minds. When we thoughts quiet down and we're not caught in our emotions, then there's a chance to be in our hearts to be deeper and centered and relaxed here with the idea that if you're relaxed and centered in yourself, you're more likely to know how to respond to the world in a wise way. And certainly I hope that Buddhist practice makes people responsive to the world. So that we can make the world a better place. So if there's injustice, we can stand up and do something about it. But we don't do it from the anger, we don't do it from the fear. We do it from the compassion, we do it from the hearts empathy, we do it from wisdom that bubbles up from inside, from a deeper place that can only come if we're not kind of caught up in the surface emotions, of anger and fear. So Buddhists will sometimes take a lot of time to do this inner work, to quiet down to empty themselves, calm down. And these emotions and strong emotion difficult emotions can be they're not the purpose of having an aversion to them, or trying to be spiritual or trying to somehow, you know, damp them down, but is a real effort to purify ourselves to kind of free ourselves from them. So that we can kind of come to the world in a new in a fresh different way. Whether it comes a quieting of thoughts, and then there's a strong movement towards no longer having the rest of our residents, the place where we live, be in our thinking. Many people live in their thoughts. If you know, that's your address, you know, whatever you're thinking, and spinning and imagining, and, you know, trying to figure things out and remembering and planning, the world of thoughts is kind of where the all the action is. There is much better, thoughts are fine, it's fine to think, within reason. But there's a much better place to make your home and the quiet heart, the settled body. being rooted here, is a better place. centered in your awareness, being mindful and being aware, is a much more interesting place to be than being spinning out in our thoughts. Now an interesting thing begins to happen if we stop living in our thoughts, in our ideas and concepts. And because we discover that many of the ways in which we define ourselves, that we describe ourselves to ourselves, no longer have such big sway on us. We no longer find ourselves interested in being limited by the self definitions that we have. The self descriptions we use for ourselves, many of them, which for many people is can be very negative. Many people have very negative self image of themselves can be self critical of themselves. Or people can have sometimes,

delusions of grandiosity, and they live in those delusions and ideas. We have some people identify with their role their job, some people identify with their status, with their relationships, they're in sometimes people, many things that people identify with. And the idea is that every time we identify or define ourselves in a fixed way, we limit ourselves. Because always more than that. So someone who doesn't live in their thoughts, might still have a role might still have an identity, but they're not living in the identity. They're not spinning the story about who they are and who they aren't and what they should be what they shouldn't be. That's spinning chasing those tails has quieted down. And as your self definition, your self identities, your stories you say about yourself, quiet down.

Who are you? One of the one of the interesting answers to that question is you don't have to answer the question. There's no need. You can be breathing, you can be at rest, it can be awake, clear in your mind, open in your heart, breathing in a relaxed way, feeling content and happy without needing to have a definition of who you are. Just be then you can watch. A definition comes in and idea comes in. It's so quick and easy that we get caught up in the world of my ideas and who I am and what I need and what's required and what I'm angry with and why I'm afraid I'm afraid with and these I comes back. So part of this work of cleansing or biting or using just breathing with experience. So everything kind of kind of begins to kind of fall off us is when come back, or come to this very simple, relaxed, open, present state of awareness where we can experience the world, as it is the external world, and the internal world that we can experience as it is, without the filter of automatic concepts and ideas we can just be. So here's a, an example of someone who is coming from this kind of place. This is a story about Ajahn Chah, a famous Thai meditation master from the last century. And a visiting Zen student asked Ajahn Chah. How old are you? You live here, you live here all year round in his monastery. And this is where this is how he replied. Hi, I live nowhere. There is no place you can find me. I have no age. To have age you must exist. And to think you exist, is already a problem. Don't make problems, then the world has none either. Don't make yourself there's nothing more to say. That's quite a statement. I mean, you know, part of our rational mind says what? He's crazy. Yeah. I have no age. I mean, of course he has an age. Of course, he has an age, right? There's no place you can find me. What do you mean, you're sitting right in front of me. I find your right now. To have age you must exist. To think you exist, it's already a problem. And I guess the assumption is that I don't show I didn't think he existed. Or maybe say differently. He didn't. He could live without having any thoughts about whether he exists or doesn't exist. That your age through is kind of an age. But age is just a concept and idea. And we can live in those concepts and ideas, or we can live without them. It's optional. But it can be so automatic. We've been grown up in a culture and society, where age and where you live and what you do. And all these things are so important. It can seem so natural automatic, that we should live from that place. That's where we relate to the world. That's how I really chose it. It's like this is second nature to be someone has a certain age. But to relax, be quiet at all these ideas and thoughts fall away and just be with an open awareness. That open awareness has no age has no concern whether it exists or doesn't exist. Maybe it doesn't exist. Just open awareness. The example that's sometimes used in Buddhism is

taking so you want to paint a beautiful painting and you get all kinds of oil paints and watercolor paints and you get all ready to do your paint maybe watercolor paints and ready to make some beautiful painting. And you dip your brush in the water you dip it in the color and you stir it around and you get the color just right. And then you lift up your your brush to hair, the space in front of you and you start making brushstrokes. No painting is made. There's nothing to receive the brush and the and the paint. Awareness can be like the space that you try to paint on. There can be thoughts there can be images, things you see and things you feel And you're very present for all these things. But the awareness receives them experiences them, and there's no traces, and nothing is painted on them. It just is.

So if I tell you my age, or I say differently, if you tell me my age, you know, it just goes right by, it goes right through just hangs in the air. It's kind of like just, you know, if you say, my age, and I look around the room and the empty space, and what happened to that age, where is it? I don't see it didn't land anywhere, those words, so that way the words on land. And the odd thing is that there's another kind of image for how this works is that sometimes it's like taking a watercolor and not painting it on the air. But we try painting it on flowing water. And reality is always changing. So we try to define the world in certain way. And it's the shifts and change, moving. And so part of the approach in Buddhism is to learn how to quiet the mind or step away from the thoughts and ideas and stories, and no longer live in them. No longer require them to be the filter through which we see the world and experience the world and experience ourselves. So this goes into then, coming back to yourself sitting quietly, breathing, breathing with what's happening, not having a problem with anything. not condemning anything, not holding on to anything. But just sitting quietly, observing, being mindful of everything, but breathing with everything. So the breathing, keeps you fluid, the breathing keeps you relaxed, the breathing as the massage that keeps you from getting caught up in the thoughts and ideas and emotions. Sit quietly and sit quietly long enough. So this purification work can happen. Whether it's days or weeks or months or years, different levels, different levels within us get purified at different speed speeds. Some things that are really easy, maybe get quiet and one sitting. We sit longer and longer, you find deeper and deeper layers of spinning, chasing the tails or going on concepts and the ideas we live in, and get quieter, quieter. And as the thoughts get quieter, the awareness gets brighter. And in a wonderful way, gets more and more empty. And in that empty awareness. There's a sense of freedom in which we have no age, we don't age, we don't die. We're not born.

Just we're here.

And then as we walk through the world, we can be hopefully, a force for the good that we cannot be if we're caught up in anger, caught up in fear, or caught up in our thoughts spinning stories and ideas and concerns. To be able to walk through the world, at ease in the world, that peace in the world doesn't mean that we're passive to things that need to be done taken care of in the world. It just means that we do it peacefully. And I hope that that itself is part of the medicine that this wider world needs. The world needs people who can walk through it, care for it in a way that's peaceful, compassionate, and loving, coming from the heart.

So we have a few minutes if anyone would like to ask any questions or see if you can tell me my age. See what happens? Hi.

I'm finding that on the days that when I meditate when my burdens seem heavier, seems like my meditation is deeper and more focused. On the days when, you know, things are kind of Whoa, hum. Or even happy, I find myself more kind of, like I say distracted, I am not able to achieve always the same quality. Why do you think that is? I don't know, it's like,

you know,

it gives you some sort of an energy if you're stung that day or that week or whatever. And so I've I keep noticing that I wonder if you know, something unfortunate needs to happen for me, or something.

I'm sure people here can share their misfortune with you. If that helps, I think that the issue is motivation. And some people are very motivated to meditate in order to deal with their struggles, their burdens, and it gets them kind of, you know, gets them motivated, okay, I'm going to really focus here and try to deal with this. Other people are much more motivated when they feel good. And they didn't

ever want to meditate when they feel lousy. And so they feel good, they feel so spiritual, like I can meditate. But the heart of this question is your motivation. So I'd encourage you to look at your motivation. And look at your motive, what your what's your motivation is to do the practice, it's fine to be motivated to do it to deal with your burdens. But is there a different motivation that you can, this may be deeper, that's also relevant, when you're feeling happy, that gives you keeps you just as motivated, just as engaged. Okay.

I do still sit, you know, out of discipline, and, and I sometimes see its benefits that I'm not able to appreciate at the moment. But somehow, my focus gets sharper, if, you know, I'm carrying something with it, and I'm agitated by something. And it's so satisfying. To get to a place at the end of a meditation where you've, you know, as you say, you provide yourself or your, you've kind of gotten rid of that state of mind or state of being

Yes, I would, again, just a repeat that are encouraged you to look at your motivations. And maybe there's some new motivation that you could find, that would help you to kind of be as motivated when you're happy as you are, when you have a burden. And one that doesn't require having a burden to be motivated. In some people, some people are motivated by the fact that they're gonna die. And you don't know when you know, and you know, you're getting up there in age. What?

What makes you say that

I plan on being around for some time.

I have a list of things to do.

You see, okay, well, then he can just take it easy for a while and wait until it gets serious. You know, as soon as coast along and no, and you probably have lots of time to coast and before you decide to get serious, something like this, to do some kind of reflection, and maybe ask some friends and other people about what motivates them what seems really important, and maybe there's a higher order of motivation that that can inspire you. Then when you sit down and say, Okay, I'm you know, in a very wonderful way relaxed but to commit, you're now committed, I'm gonna really do this. Okay, let me know what happens with you discover me

maybe I will get younger

Nigeria Now maybe you'll discover you have ageless, ageless. Thank you. Thanks.

Anybody else?

No five? A son. Yeah. I don't know if I fully formulated this idea yet, but it's been sitting with me for a while. So I wanted to say thank you for what you said tonight. And also, I think what you were talking about about a week ago, when or so, when you talked about the Nazis coming at your door?

Because me, that wasn't that long. Okay,

so maybe I've just been blessed with two talks.

Because I've been just unsatisfied with the dialogue going on in our country. And I think I've been unsatisfied, because it doesn't feel to me, either side. Like what I'm attempting to learn here, and what I think is being taught here. You know, one word that's bandied about a lot is outrage. And I'm finding that a little unsatisfying, because I feel like, that's not from a place of wisdom. And for me, I turned the TV off last night very quickly, and I went to a yoga class. And I found that much more satisfying, I just felt that my continuing to engage in watching the television was my engaging in conflict in a way, that wasn't a conflict that made me feel like I could then do good in the world, then I felt I was doing probably more good by turning it off and going to the yoga class. And I am thinking you, I think, because of people who I might think would be leaders around issues that are poor to me, or at least what I believe is the right side, I think are more pushing the outrage part of it and less. And that, to me, leads to us be feeling separated from each other, from ourselves and from ourselves. And I, that's what's unsatisfying to me is that, for me, feeling more connected is really important. And so I appreciate what you said, yeah.

Yeah, so the idea that anger, to some degree fear can actually separate us and keep us apart from each other. So we're not connected, is definitely true. And it's also separates us from ourselves. And then but both are situations are uncomfortable situations to be in. And when some people are uncomfortable, they go, they fall back into the old habits of how to deal with discomfort, trying to fix it. And one way is to blame someone else. And to be outraged, even more more angry. And so it becomes a, it can become stronger and stronger. And then the more angry we become, or the more we're blaming other people more caught up with the concerns and the stories, the more separated we become from ourselves and from other people. And then the route that I was talking about today, when we do this work of cleansing ourselves with all these stories and ideas and emotions is a way of reestablishing a connection to ourselves, and then hopefully a richer connection to the world around us. And if you want to see an example of this is come to Jack for dance talk. When he cut talks here, this benefit on November 3, he comes with his inmates released his parole inmates. I mean, some of the people he works with our eggs are examples of people who've been caught in their thoughts and their anger, their fear and their hurt, and in more dramatic ways than you saw last night on TV. And that's why they're in jail. And he works with them. And that transformation they make, and they is phenomenal. What's possible, and to see if it's possible for them, then it's possible for us because you know, there's that, you know, there level of challenge they have is so great. So I'll end with one little saying that came out of the programs as yaak taught in, in San Quentin. It was the this program for these guys and gang members, former gang members and there was two guys who were posing apparently posing gangs, but they're both in that program with him. And then one of them said, some point I think I understand now, some something about what they were teaching. And the prisoner said, hurt. People hurt, hurt people hurt other people. So hurt people hurt. The other gang member said and healed people heal. So that's become their motto and sankranthi hurts people hurt healed people heal. So we could all do this. And so I think you could go into yoga class was probably the wisest thing you can do given the circumstance. So thank you all. And I hope you sit quietly in, let some of this stuff fall off you some bits old and crusty. You don't need it anymore. Thank you.