

2017-10-07 Pleasure Vs Happiness

Mon, 9/28 9:45PM • 37:32

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

thoughts, pleasure, unpleasant, sense, buddha, life, people, feel, flesh, flowing, happiness, world, quality, pleasant, distinction, feelings, thinking, settled, pain, stability

SPEAKERS

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So, I'll try to say a few more words about the topic I mentioned this morning a little bit louder. So let's see, is it loud enough now? Okay. So, it's, I think it's relatively common in many walks of life, to distinguish between pleasure and happiness. And when they make this distinction, the distinction is between physical pleasure, which a person can experience while they're feeling quite unhappy. And then the corollary is you can feel physical pain, while you're quite happy, that a pleasure or pain can be self inflicted and afflicted by the things around us. And, to some degree, we have choice about that. And some people exercise that choice a lot around pleasure, in fact, many people are much more driven by the desire for comfort and pleasure, than they probably care to admit, is quite a common concern. And people organize their whole life and sometimes, you know, their, their, their work and their earning money. And, you know, a lot of it says, a lot of time is spent to earn enough money for some people, so that they can have more pleasure. And they said, No, not me. But then they buy a car, which is more than they really need to get around. Because it's, they want to have a pleasant drive, they have a house that's bigger, or the view that's better, or clothes, which are nicer, because it feels so good to have those clothes on. And that really soft cotton, that velvety cotton, you know, that cost twice as much as just going down to target. And, you know, it's, you know, I once went, many years ago, I was buying a car. And so the car sales person was taking me, I was taking, I guess, the person for a drive. And this was maybe 25 years ago or so. And the person said, you know, it also comes with air conditioner. And I said, I don't need air conditioner. And the person said, well, you deserve it. You know, what, this person No, but what I deserve, and that was, there was a language, you know, it's, and so you know, so I could have gotten an air conditioner and paid some extra money and, and, you know, and but just so, you know, the desire for comfort for pleasure drives people, some people confuse happiness and pleasure. And so for example, people who have pursue alcohol, food, sex, recreation opportunities, there's all kinds of things you can pay for, and get and do, which are pleasant and give kind of a high and get in, if they're intensely pleasant, can you really get you going and, you know, for the time being, you feel really alive and engaged, it's really great. But it's really induced, by the experience that we're having. You can't, in the same way, induce happiness, you know, you can't just like, you know, pay, you know, we're down and pay a certain amount of money, and, you know, the happiness store and put down your \$10. And, you know, and get a dose of happiness, and then, you know, that lasts for a week or so. But happiness is a little bit more ephemeral. And it's not just dependent on the pleasure that we're experiencing. And so some people confuse that. So they're constantly in the pursuit of pleasure. And now they need to keep that pleasure. And some people will do that they keep on happiness that day, because as long as had the pleasure, they don't have to pay attention to anything else that's going on. So this distinction between pleasure and happiness. There's also distinction between pain and unhappiness. And the happiness not happiness belongs to something internal, and inner sense of well being or the opposite of well, being poor, poor, poor. I don't know, well being an immobile being, the

sense of well being, that is there for a lot of different factors, and that are more than just what's physical.

So the Buddha makes this distinction as well, but he makes it maybe differently than how we make it in the modern world. He makes a distinction between the feelings that are The flesh and the word that he uses of the flesh, and those which are not to the flesh. Some people who translate this into English, they don't translate it as flesh. Sometimes they, they translate as feelings which are worldly, and feelings which are non worldly or unworldly. And that seems a little odd to me to use that. But still, that's one way one attempt to kind of translate this kind of these Pali terms and the Buddha makes this distinction. And the place where he makes this distinction in the his instructions of mindfulness is quite significant. And took me a while to understand how important this transition is to see this distinction. But of the flesh has to do with those feelings we have, that come from how our senses are stimulated. So if I see something, the eye senses stimulated, if I hear something, taste something, smell something or have tactile touch. And there's all this sense data that comes in. And that sense data can be the be pleasant and unpleasant. The direct sense experience itself is pleasant and unpleasant in the moment that it's happening. It might remain unpleasant as a memory. But you know, if I poke myself hard enough, in my knee, it will be painful, I take my hand or with my finger away, and it's a little longer painful. It has to do with the stimulus operating. And, of the flesh also includes in the, you know, you have to kind of build bit expensive or permissive in your use of words in English. But the Buddhism has six senses. And there's a five ordinary senses that we refer to. And then there's a sense organ, that allows you to recognize what's happening in your mind, and your inner life. And of your mind is, you know, so if you have a thought, you know, you know, you have a thought, because you can say, tell your friend, I've a thought. And they said, Really, and so then they'll hear your thought, you know, I have, you know, I was thinking about something No, you know, so you kind of recognize that you're having a thought. And that recognition happens through the mind or mind sense. And that also is a momentary experience. And when you're having a thought, there's a recognition of that thought, after that, it's just a memory of having a thought. And a thought can be pleasant and unpleasant. I've had unpleasant thoughts, and I've had pleasant thoughts, some of you some people, me as well, we'll get involved in our thoughts during meditation, because of the pleasure it gives fantasies, wonderful fantasies, that the wide range of, and it just the hook that keeps us going is the pleasure of it. And so there's a pleasant ones. And there's also the unpleasant ones. And oddly enough, the hook to keep those going going, is that as the unpleasantness of those, that somehow they grab us or we, you know, we're caught, caught in its orbit somehow. And so there's a variety of things besides thoughts you can be aware of internally. But in the moment to moment experience of it, it's it's just sense data that comes in and it can be pleasant or unpleasant. It can different ways it can be felt, not of the flesh, our feelings we have internally, which are not dependent on the senses being stimulated. So it depends more on how our inner biological psychological system systems are flowing or working in harmony or not working in harmony. It has to do with a sense of feeling of what's actually going on.

Kind of, it's a little bit more like a mood. But sometimes it can be more enduring than a mood. But it's kind of like the inner quality of being that we have. And the sense of the inner quality of our being. as being something that's worth paying attention to, I think is quite useful. Because that's really much closer to where we're going to find our freedom. We're going to find our well being and our happiness. It's where we find things like love and compassion is residing in that place. We have an inner sense of our wellbeing, the quality of our being quality of our inner life. And the quality of inner life can be quite different than the quality of our outer life. A person can live in They're very unpleasant environment, difficult environment. And, and, you know, it can be quite challenging externally. But internally, there's a deep sense of, well, being deep sense of safety, a deep sense of security, a deep sense of confidence able to kind of just, you know, that just holds a person, and a person can walk through the world. And

the, the unpleasant experiences of the world don't penetrate very deeply. And in fact, if there was an inner sense of well being is quite strong, it becomes almost like a shield or like a, I don't know what to what the best analogy is, but it's almost like Teflon, maybe, you know, things happen, but it just doesn't stick, it just kind of keeps going off where it runs off, because it doesn't go anywhere. Or do it a little bit, borrow an analogy for from the Buddha, the Buddha used the language of wetness and water, often for some of these deep inner sense of well being when it's really strong, this pleasures or pleasures or feelings, not to the flesh. And he talks about getting saturated with this fluid of joy and well being. And so if you're really kind of filled in the wet, the rain doesn't penetrate anymore, does not know where to go. You know, and so, you know, nothing can get in there, because it's so full. And the analogy that Buddha used a little bit for this kind of fullness of this inner sense of well being that's well established, is if you take a you know, a wet ball, you know, wet ball of clay, and you throw it against the solid door, the clay just kind of gets off flat and falls and falls apart and just loses the shape. But if you take a ball of thread or yarn, and throw it against the door, nothing happens through the RNA doesn't, nothing kind of changes. And so somehow, the when we're, we become resilient, we get not affected by things, when we're kind of when a certain kind of way, and we were soft, with full, when we're a sense of happiness, well being joy, that's kind of wells up from the inside. And so what kind of well being is not dependent on the things in the environment, our senses, our experience, being pleasant, and having good experiences. So there's probably more than, probably many answers for this. But one of the answers, the primary one that Buddha gave was through meditation practice, that when you meditate, that, you know, in, nowadays, we say, for example, serotonin starts flowing, or oxytocin starts flowing. And we have these kind of maybe a little bit unfortunate mistake, you know, mechanical kind of descriptions of some of this well being that begins welling up, there's all these good feelings that begin flowing through our body. And sometimes it can feel like almost like a flow like an energy is kind of vibrating or flowing throughout the body. And so maybe there are some chemicals that are being released as we do this, this practice.

I like to think of it more that that our assists the language of the ancient texts is that unified, being collected. And the idea of unification means that we're not divided against ourselves, there's no conflict, or we're not going off and in diverse ways, not dispersed with their energies, and they're all are who we are. And so everything is kind of operating in harmony, everything's operating together. And we're settled, there's not the stress levels, there's not preoccupations with other things and, and that conflicts with this in that, and we're kind of settled, we start becoming harmonized or unified, are psychophysical kind of functioning, and for our energies and our functioning to operate freely and flow nicely. And there seems to be you know, just it's especially if it can just do one thing, just this one thing, focus on the breath and get concentrated. There's some kind of inner stability, calm, subtleness and distractibility. We're certainly not adding stressful factors into the mix. If your mind gets quiet and calm, you're not thinking about, you know, work stress and work jobs or relationship problems. You know, thinking about what you need in the future. What happened in that past, you're not having those kinds of thoughts, which are unpleasant. And that tend to then have a lingering effects leave traces of us, where we start feeling kind of feeling bad because of the kind of thoughts we're having. And so we settle down. And we're not in this natural functioning seems to operate more and more fully the language the Buddha used for this or that, like the image he used for the analogy was a lake that a nice, beautiful clear Mountain Lake perhaps. And there he says there was no, no rivers were flowing into the lake. And it's not raining. However, the lake is being replenished, and it's being replenished from the inside of the lake itself. So nothing's coming from the outside, there's no, there's no sense data coming in no sights and sounds and all that nothing's required from the outside and not raining, I don't know what that that's the rivers the rain, I don't know what that is, maybe that's the mind. And that doesn't rain down or thoughts or something. And, but rather, this lake has an underwater spring that wells up from the floor of the lake. And it and this, you know, is nice flow of current coming up and replenishes the lake with

refreshing water. And so the same thing would sometimes feel some people feel almost that way, sometimes it's other ways. But you sit in and it gets settled. And this really nice feeling well, sir, some people will complain and say, well, that's you know, where else is going to be, but in the senses, my senses are operating, my body is flowing here. So it must be of the flesh. Also, the distinction is that it's not being there's not an external stimuli, that are causing pleasure. It's something that's flowing to the inside, a kind of arising, not from the outside, from the inside, from the inside out. When everything's in harmony, everything's kind of connected and settled. And when this becomes strong, you know, when there are there's quality of your inner being is well established, then it's possible to go through the world and have unpleasant things happen. And they just kind of like Teflon, or they don't really affect us, they are they're only, you know, they say skin deep. You know, okay, that was unpleasant. But you know, there's that sense of stability and calm is still there. And there's something better, there's a better game in town, then some of the kind of sense world and experiences around us. Interestingly, this is also true with our thoughts that are in a certain kind of way, if you allow me to kind of this kind of language, a little generous to me is that you listen, is our thoughts are also a little bit external, to this inner system of that it belongs to our qualities of a well being. And because you can have a thought, that's unpleasant. And if you have enough inner well being and stability, that thought doesn't impact doesn't impact anything, doesn't go anywhere, it's always just a thought. Or it could be that we have an unpleasant thought. And suddenly, our whole mood changes, we kind of just everything shifts and change, we feel oppressed by it. If you all know, that's, you know, and we're weighed down by the kind of thoughts we have. So do we allow our thoughts to impact us?

Or do we allow our thoughts to kind of just rain off like rain? this inner well being is kind of like an umbrella, maybe more than a Teflon. So, we have these thoughts that have all kinds of, you know, and in some places, they have acid rain. And so, you know, it's kind of painful to have the thoughts come in. But if you have an umbrella and the rain just washes washes right off. So to have, it's so easy to have thoughts for most of us, probably for some of you as well, that today, you had more easy thoughts than you probably wish your head and thoughts come and go quite easily. And, and, and, you know, are you in charge of your thoughts? Or your thought or thoughts you? Or is there some kind of impersonal quality of your thoughts that thoughts just occur and, you know, is you know, just, you know, what, what's the connection you to who you truly are in your thoughts? It's an interesting question. My wife many years ago had a brief period of medically induced menopause. And it lasts, how long was lasted maybe three months and then she was back on course, the way she was supposed to be but but during that time, she said To tell me, I'm having thoughts, which are not my thoughts. You know, it's the hormones or something changing, these are not my thoughts. And she didn't recognize them as hers. And so she just like, she never told me what they were. Maybe I never asked. But in Hebrew, why do we have thoughts? You know, what were these thoughts come through. And for some of us thoughts are dime a dozen, you know, all kinds of minds capable of all kinds of bizarre things. In fact, one of the great lessons that I received growing up from my father was when I was about 14, he kind of had a little bit of a light Father, Son talk. And he said to me something like, as you grow up and live your life, from time to time, you might have some bizarre thoughts. And then he said, don't worry about it, everyone has that. And so I lived my life. And sure enough, it happened. You know, once or twice, I think, that I had a bizarre thought, and I was prepared, I was ready, rather than being alarmed, or like, thinking this is great, or whatever. So and so there's sense of, there's an impersonality, in the thoughts, they're not that necessarily, I don't have to define myself by my thoughts. But one of the ways that the reign of thoughts can affect our inner sense sensibility, how we are, is if we take the thoughts as personal, we take them as real, or in terms of give them a lot of authority. And there's a way in which that those the sense data of thoughts coming in, they land, and we get, you know, and they kind of reverberate inside, and they can leave traces inside of us, in terms of our mood, our feelings, and we can have a whole series of feelings, inner feelings are our quality of our inner life actually decreases dramatically,

because of the quality of the thoughts that we have. And because we're allowing them to come in, they come in a certain way. One of the things we learned from mindfulness practice, is to recognize a thought as a thought, but you know, doesn't have to be anything else. And it's possible. Some people find it very helpful. When they label use a mental note to say, well, thinking, thinking, to add one word to that, or two words, it's only a thought. It's only a thought, and sometimes are only thinking, and suddenly, that little addition, somehow can break. Sometimes the trends or the authority or the quietness, and the thought is just a thought. And sometimes things are just a thought, that doesn't mean that that thought should be dismissed or ignored. It's a valuable thought. But not every thought that you have, please write. You know, I kind of doubt that your track record, if you've kept a statistical count of which thoughts you had were really significant and important than have great lasting value that you remember for years and years and really served your life, you know, the, I bet that it's a very, very small percentage of your thoughts. The track record of how successful your thoughts are, how useful they are, I guess, you know, it's probably not that high.

So it's possible with mindfulness practice, no thinking, thinking, and after a while, get a sense of a thought arises and it goes arises and it goes, and there's no latching on to it. No, letting yourself getting involved in it. In mindfulness, when it's strong, it can function that way. It's quite freeing and nice. I, myself have a very generally have a have a, I have a friendly relationship to my thinking, I kind of like my thinking, I enjoy thinking, my thinking has been kind to me, mostly. And, you know, I still feel like I think, you know, I'm not troubled too often by my thoughts. So, and I've learned how to be with my thinking, so that it doesn't really interfere too much with my meditation. Sometimes it does. And I have to kind of do a course correction or do something. But you know, I just, mostly, I have this kind of nice, positive relationship with my thoughts. Because I don't let them bother me. They're there. They can do their business. Sometimes they're like little flies, you know, you know, friendly flies, you know, kind of buzzing around on the edges. And I just let them stay there. You know, my thoughts recede to the peripheral periphery, and I don't pay much attention to them sometimes. They don't, you know, I've learned on you know, growing up to be bothered by them or caught by them and they just go through and do what they do. And all attribute to mindfulness practice learning to see it clearly. But as we get settled and concentrated in the practice, then there's also this umbrella factor that's built, built up the sense of inner well being that develops. And that also becomes a little bit of a support. So it's not so automatic that the experiences of the world experiences of our mind, impact us in a deep way or inner quality of being. And the more stable and stronger that inner sense of inner freedom is or the inner sense of calm or the inner sense of pieces. The more we have a reservoir, or we have a stability or a place, or something that you know, the things of the world kind of bounce off of our, or we have a home, where we can live in a sense. And that home doesn't depend on what's happening in the world around us. And this is one of the great gifts of doing this practice, to have our inner sense of well being independent of what's happening in the world around us. If we're dependent on what's happening in the world around us, for our inner sense of well being, you know, then we're kind of, we want to kind of rearrange the world, if that's where we think our happiness is going to be, we're going to want to fix the world, just like that get everything lined up just perfectly and get everyone to behave properly. So that we get the pleasure get to support get all the things just perfect. And, you know, a problem with that is that it doesn't stop. People don't behave well enough, the world reality doesn't behave the way we want it to behave. So we're constantly having to fend it off, or adjusted or keep keep doing the work, it's a lot easier to have an inner sense of peace, which is independent of the world out there. And then you don't have to always be fixing the world or fixing you know, everything up, you know, all the time. So the idea of becoming, having your happiness become independent, it doesn't mean that you can't be happy with what's going on in the world around you. It doesn't mean that you can't be impacted by what goes on around, it means that some core aspect of who you are, is not is independent of all that some core inside some stability or place of refuge or home, you know, is free and independent of the conditions of your life and how it is what a gift to discover how to do that. That's phenomenal. So this distinction that

Buddha makes between feelings of the flesh, and feelings, not of the flesh is a transition point in the practice of mindfulness practice, because his instructions are mindfulness, he starts with meditating on the breathing. And then he goes to be mindful of the body in various ways. And then he goes and talks about mindfulness of the feelings of the flesh. And then he talks about those feelings which are not of the flesh.

And, and he made clearly makes this distinction. And if you look at the Satipatthana Sutta, this discourse where the Buddha gives us instructions, it's one of the most carefully constructed suit dose of the Buddha, it's a very carefully it's almost, I don't know if it's written up geometrically, or kinda like math, almost barrack engineer to kind of structured carefully. And there's a number of suttas that are very carefully engineered in such a way that they have a midpoint. And the midpoint of the text is kind of like the climax. And this Satipatthana Sutta is one of them enough the climax, but it's a very important midpoint. And the way you see it is you see it numerically. There are 13 exercises in this discourse. And if you take the midpoint of 13, it's seven. Right? It's the right my math is like so good. So there are six exercises on one side and six on the other. And the bridge between them is this exercise on the feelings of the flesh and not of the flesh. And so what happens is in this text, the first six exercises are about the body And then it goes into this seventh exercise where there's a transition from of the flesh to of not of the flesh. And then the rest of the exercises have to do more with this inner life, the mind, what goes on there. So when there's enough stability and concentration, or focus on breathing, focus on the body, and stable enough, at some point, people become more and more aware of what is what's feeling and what it what they're actually like, what they're feeling, what's, what they're sensing what their experience is, like, on the inside, the quality of their being. And then we become the custodian of that. No one else, no one else can be the custodian of the quality of your inner life. You're really, that's really our own thing. And then to care for that and 10 and started understanding some of the conditional conditions cause and effect relationships of what goes on in there. What affects it, what influences it. What's the state's what's the state of the mind or the heart? in different situations? The quality is in the mind, the heart, the inner quality? Does it feel collected as if you're scattered? Does it feel expansive? Does it feel contracted? Does it feel like it's kind of filled with greed and hate? Or is it filled with love and generosity? What does it feel like in their, in their life? So we started becoming aware of that, and the external experiences, we have the pleasant and unpleasant experiences, what's happening world around us, starts becoming less important than the quality of our inner life, the quality of our being. And this opens up the door to appreciating more and more, what helps us to be free. And what keeps us from being free. To see the effect the consequences of attachment and clinging. And you know, many people know that thinking is not good to being attached is not good. But there's a whole different way of understanding our inner life. When we actually feel and see the consequences of attachment, conscious, consider clinging, and the and when there's a real letting go and freeing of clinging, the dramatic difference that happens to the inner quality of being as we have that release, and the sense of deep inner sense of well being of peace or freedom, a kind of luminous emptiness that people some people refer to. And then the clear this experience becomes of this inner sense of well being, the more it becomes a support for our lives, and the more free we become. And it's very nice. So as you practice, it might be interesting, this distinction, to look at it and to see and to see in your life. What is it that affects the inner quality of your being? The inner? Are you letting the inner quality of your being be affected by the sense experiences of your life? The things that are going on in the external world? How far you're letting that kind of those rivers flow in?

Or are you letting your thoughts that you have affect you? Granted, you can have all kinds of thoughts. Maybe that you know, maybe you don't stop the rain, but you Let the rain to penetrate you do you really take it up? Do you get involved we just didn't wash right off, wash right off. And, you know, what's your, What's your relationship to all this stuff? And is there some place of a little bit greater freedom you can

have in relationship to feelings of the flesh. There's nothing wrong with pleasant feelings in and of themselves. They don't have to kind of be now deny them, but but pleasant feelings, unpleasant feelings with the flesh. What's it like to be free of those and to experiment in different situations? For me, in my early years of practice, I got lots of experience with pain. I didn't actually look for it to be true for painful situations. But I remember there were occasions where I would had to do physical work there was very painful. I remember once I was living at the Zen center and I had to carry something really heavy with someone, another person across the whole farm gringo charm was like it was a long distance with the carrier and a member of pain and digging into my hands. And I got really curious you know, like what's going on here? What's, what's the impact? What is it like to be to feel the pain but not be continent? What is it? What is it like? What is it like? And I didn't learn much except endurance from from that exercise. But I can still remember, you know, I was trying to figure this out how, what is this? What is this? And so, you know, not to turn away quickly from pain is an interesting thing to do. If you get a headache, that's a fascinating subject of mindfulness, because that's of the flesh, kind of, in this kind of language. And can, you know, explore and compare how do I find how to be with a headache? So that I don't know, I'm not in pain. My head is in pain, but I'm not in pain, or the inner quality well being, it's not in pain. How do we relate to it? So we don't, it doesn't, you know, rain in and seep in and affect us? What is that like? And I've had fascinating times, exploring headaches and all kinds of things. Sometimes I think I've been better at, sometimes it's easier with pain than it is with pleasure, just because it's it's more motivating, to be free of pain. And pleasure. So I hope this was interesting. I hope it was evocative interesting for you to kind of look at your life and explore something. And I want to thank you all for coming. Some of you came, maybe for part of the day some of you came for the whole day. And I'm very fond of saying at these entities, these silent day Long's that is one of my favorite things we do here at IMC. And partly, it's my favorite because it's so invaluable, invaluable to be able to spend a day in silence. And just be with yourself, practice with yourself, see what comes up and keep working at it. And it's one of the put with a lot of confidence. This is where there's a lot of deepening in the practice. And it's just, I think it's I hope it's nice to sometimes get teachings. But I think that, you know, teachings can only go skin deep with them the only way they can go that far. And it's by doing this practice that Dharma practice can really go deep in us and so to have this opportunity and have so many people come and participate is a wonderful thing. And I thank you very much for it.