

# 2018-08-13 Greed Hatred And Delusion

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delusion, greed, buddha, people, ethical, thorns, teaching, hate, idea, person, world, good, feel, thought, religion, question, important, rely, buddhism, injure

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So Good evening, everyone, and welcome to IMC. And I'd like to start this evening with recounting a conversation that was reported to have been spoken some 2500 years ago. And it's a conversation between the Buddhist disciple, Ananda and man who was visiting belong to a different religion. And the man asked three questions of a Ananda. He asked, Who is it that has a teaching that is well proclaimed? And then he asked, who is it who practices a good practice? And the third question is, Who is it who has attained, let me see, I should get it right. Yeah. Who are the fortunate ones? Who are those who are fortunate? So that's what he asked.

And so Ananda made this very interesting response. So the first question is about who has a well proclaimed doctrine back then in ancient India, in the shift to people like Ananda who was a monk, a renunciant. It was really talking about religious doctrines of yours. Whatever you call it religious. And Annada said that whoever teaches a doctrine for the abandonment, of greed, hate and delusion. Whoever teaches the doctrine for the abandonment of greed, hate and delusion, has a wealth proclaim Dharma or teaching. And then whoever is practicing to abandon greed, hate and delusion is practicing well. Answering the second question, then the third question was answered by whoever has abandoned greed, hate and delusion are the fortunate ones. So this is an interesting answer a number of ways. Back in the ancient India, there was a it was a debate culture between people different religions. And so it wasn't so innocent for someone to come and ask the Buddha question like this. It could easily be that he was prepared to have been in debate with him. And he was kind of maybe he was testing him and finding out you know, what's, you know, what do you think is the best? What do you think the best teaching is? What do you think the best practices? And what do you think the best attainment is? And, and, and one of the things that makes it a good answer interesting, was in in highlighting possibility of the end or the abandonment of greed, hate and delusion. He was offering a response, which had no which wasn't really a doctrine. It wasn't a set of religious principles. It wasn't a reference to the supernatural world. You know, rebirth and some kind of in Ultimate cosmic truth or something reality, it wasn't some existential truth about the nature of humanity or the nature of the universe we're in. It wasn't anything that we would normally normally consider to be religious doctrine. And now in the modern, modern West, perhaps when someone talks about, you know, overcoming greed, hate and delusion, it probably kind of would fit closer into psychology than into religion. You want to get the IRS, nonprofit, nonprofit status for being a religion. And you have to kind of explain your religious beliefs a little bit to the IRS to get approved and you say, well, we believe in the abandonment of greed, hate and delusion. I would like to be a religion. I think people would like what And so the Ananda is coming back with a response that doesn't have. It's not it doesn't engage, or it doesn't set up a possibility for conflict or debate about spiritual and religious ideas about what's ultimately true. The other thing he did is that I think back in the ancient world maybe and I hope in our world to our world as well, that I think it's generally considered a good thing. Not to have greed, it's generally considered a good thing not to have

hate. And it's generally considered a good thing not to have delusion. So this was a something that most people could agree on. This is really good. And so he was offering something that was easily understood easily kind of valued and that across the board so when he gave this response to the man, the man said, fantastic. I'd like now I'd like to become I go for refuge now to the Buddha Dharma Sangha. He thought this was a good enough answer that he now became kind of a Buddhist. So clearly, he thought that greed, hate and delusion was a very wonderful goal.

Now, when I was 13, it was around that, around that age, I started to somehow become conscious and conscious enough of ideas was going on in this world that I was wondering about this notion of God. I was raised basically an atheist and I was an atheist. But you know, the God thing was around our society. So I was beginning to you know, and remember, there used to be Be Mormons who would come knocking at the door. And they they know that they would stand there in the door. And we'd have these discussions, debates, maybe, about God. So there was thinking about God and all that. So the so my idea was that I thought that's 13 year old was that if there was a god or there is a God, I guess God, God isn't something that was, was is and will be, if there is a God. Other primary thing that God would like to see is for people to be ethical to live an ethical life. And beyond that, I couldn't imagine a god cared whether you believed in him him or her or not, as long as you're ethical, it just like didn't compute like why, why, you know why? if you're if you're living an ethical good life, then Shouldn't that be end up be enough. So it didn't really matter if you believe that God decided wouldn't matter to us your ethical. Now maybe that kind of come in a 13 year old, maybe that idea came a little bit out of the kind of cultural background that I had I, I was, I was born into a new age and culture, which is very individualistic. I'm a stickler kind of individualism, that maybe it's a kind of a socialist individualism or individualistic socialism or something. So But anyway, the idea of kind of being an individual and just like, just being yourself and being ethical is enough, maybe it was kind of came from that culture. So the Buddha said, moneta present this kind of almost like ethical ideal, the abandonment of greed, hate and delusion. And why it's called what I call an ethical also is because this is the primary, what these three things are called the primary roots in Buddhism, the roots of all unethical behavior. So if you're involved in in unethical behavior, one of these one or all three of these routes have to be operating, there has to be Greed has to be hate, and it has to be delusion. And you find in these Buddhist texts and Buddhist teachers like myself, Well sometimes kind of rattle off this greed, hate and delusion, so freely refer to it over and over and over again, that I imagine that if you hear it or read about it so much, it kind of just kind of you kind of gloss over it. But what I want to say today is that in this ancient teachings of the Buddha, these are really a fundamental category fundamental teaching. The idea of greed, hate and delusion, the umbrella terms that encompass a whole family of mental states that under each of those categories. So, you know, so greed is not just greed, it's also must. It's craving, it's attachment. It's longing. It's the whole. There's a list in one ancient texts that goes on over some, like, I don't know how many 3040 synonyms, of course, synonyms for this. So they're carrying how big they are there they are kind of very wide, encompassing a wide range of things has mental states. The Buddha said repeatedly redefined repeatedly the goal that he has, for his teaching for whereas teachings are pointing to is the destruction of greed. Hate delusion. And so, to really make this point, you know, strong that this is really important.

There's a series of 44 discourses like these ancient texts have all these, you know, series of short little discourses all together, they organize them and gathered them together and this 44 of them in a row, where the Buddha these discourse is pretty much the same, but the, the main point is to offer a whole series of synonyms for the destruction of greed, hate and delusion. And this is things like greed, hate and delusion. Is, is the, the destruction Excuse me.

The destruction of greed, hate and delusion is the truth. The destruction of greed, hate and delusion is Nirvana. The destruction of greed, hate and delusion is the deathless. The destruction of greed, hate and delusion is the ageless, that destruction of one my favorite one is the destruction of greed, hate and delusion is the amazing and so all these kind of, you know, wonderful, you know, ultimate kind of labels. So on one hand would you find in Ancient World The Buddha was reluctant to offer ultimate teachings, this is ultimately true. But he did talk about a goal where ultimately or fully greed, hate and delusion was eradicated was uprooted their roots in us and we have to approve them and the reason why they're called routes They're because they're like a plant that some plants if you just simply chop off the top above the ground, they'll re sprout. And so all the manifestations all the behavior that comes out of greed, hate and delusion, you might stop the behavior, you might stop certain attitudes and certain kinds of things that come from greed and delusion. But if the roots are still there, they'll the greed and delusion will steeply continue to pop up. Now the reason one of the so the Buddha also talked a lot about this greed, hate and delusion thing. One of the things he said is that greed, hate and delusion, our fixation, greed, hate and delusion are are harmful. They're injurious. Greed, hate and delusion injures the person who has greed, hate and delusion. And that's a little bit hard for people to see who have these things, especially. Because there's something about greed, hate and delusion, which camouflages itself, for the person who has it. With greed, for example, we really generally want something. And so we focus on the object of what we want. If we have hatred, or ill will, it's usually about some thing that we have ill will about. And it can be a lot of energy, behind the desire and a lot of energy bound on what we don't like. And so we're focusing on the thing that we're a thing as opposed to being attentive to what the what it feels like in us to have those states. But if we're able to feel strong desire, and turn our attention around 180 degrees and look at ourselves and feel ourselves, we'll feel like greed is a fever of fixation of burden form of injury harm. These are all words that the Buddha used. Hatred the same way that hatred is a uncomfortable, it's a vexation, it's a suffering, it's painful, it's harmful. It's an injury, it's a burden. Same with illusion. So there's something about the inherent in these qualities. So they're called ethical. But it's not so much. Not only its ethical, partly because of its injuries, but it injures the person who has it. So if you have a splinter, if you have a thorn in your foot, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to pull it out to take it out. You don't need to have you know, you have a thorn and you don't have to go in on the internet. You know, and, and in and, you know, find it you know, I'm not gonna do anything about the store and I'm not going to do it. I'm gonna leave it there until I get 32 reasons for why it needs to come out. You just put your bed down and pull it out. So the idea is that in the same way, if you can feel the effect that greed, hatred and delusion has on you, wanting to eradicate it to pull it out, is as easily the motivation for it. It is as easy as having this thorn in your foot. In other words, we don't need to have religious teachings, you don't need to go to IMC, you don't need to go, you know, read the teachings of the Buddha. You don't need to you don't need anyone to tell you to stop doing something that you feel is you feel or you see is injuring yourself.

And this is and so the Buddha when he gave examples of what you could know, for your He talked about greed, hate and delusion, and the abandonment of greed, hate and delusion is a wonderful texts sutta where the Buddha talks about this. Where are these people come to the Buddha. And they say a lot of religious people, the different teachers and stuff with different religions come through town. And they all have different doctrines and teachings. They're all saying we have the truth and all that. And so, they go to the Buddha and say, Now can you tell us who's whose teachings are true and false? So the Buddha does an interesting move. And what he does repeatedly in his teaching, he doesn't engage people on the question of what is religiously true and false. So they asked him, can you tell us what is true and false? And he says, so he doesn't answer them directly changes the he's a politician to kind of like write it. changes the religion religious politician, he changes the conversation to in a different direction. He says first he says it's first associated understands is he is here it's right. It's it is confusing, perplexing to have all these different people come around and make all these different claims. Do not

rely on tradition. Do not rely on scripture. Do not rely on your teachers do not rely on this person just because the person is your guru. Do not rely on your logic. Do not rely on your intuition kind of and you've been mentioned a few others. Now, these sources of authority are kind of like pretty standard punk, foundational for a lot of different religious beliefs. They From the sources. And so he says, Don't rely on them, what's left. And what he said was you should rely on your own experience. But not in your own experience. You rely on your own experience too naively, we end up relying on our opinions, on our preferences on our interpretations of things. But so what it what part of our direct experience did the Buddha emphasize? He said, the way he most pointed to is when you can feel to use my language, a thorn in your foot. When you can feel in yourself, something hurts, or that something doesn't hurt. If you're recognized, you're being harmed, or you're recognized you're being benefited. When you recognize something hurts you when you recognize something is brings happiness. Or bring suffering. And then he uses as an example of what you can know that is causes harm, and what you know, causes the opposite. He goes through the three unethical routes greed, hate and delusion. This you can know for yourself. So if you want to rely on your nephew, so, again, he changes that they're like that from the question. First he says, Don't you know he doesn't answer the question about Is it true or false? It tells people what to what not to rely on. And then rather than answer, engage in discussion, what's true and false religious ideas and doctrine. He's more interested in action. The Buddha was more interested in what people do, then what they than what they believe and what he was interested in what they do it. They learn to abandon the things that they do that causes harm. And learn to engage in those things which are beneficial. And his assumption is you can know this for yourself, by paying careful attention to yourself by really knowing here.

And this is where the function of might one of the key functions of mindfulness, the function of mindfulness is not just to kind of just, you know, calm down and have less stress in your life. Stress Reduction is to create the conditions enough calm enough clear attention, to be able to feel the thorniness, the agitation, the taxation, of these different movements of a ma our mind we have, and I think it's fair to say there's plenty of people who have greed, hate and delusion, who don't feel how painful it is to have these things. If they did, that would be motivating for them to, to abandon them to stop having them for the Buddha, so greed, hate and delusion is the foundation the root, not only for all unethical behavior, but the root for all suffering. And this is where it gets really interesting in terms of the message of the Buddha, or what he's pointing to is that he's pointing to the total ending of what he calls suffering, the total ending of suffering and replacing it, and with something much better. And there's two words that he uses to just talk about what's better. He talks about peace, and he talks about happiness. The two kind of the positive mental states are qualities that you know, the opposite for him. And so a transformation to the absence of greed, hate and delusion. That brings peace and happiness. Now, some people might say that the abandonment of greed, hate and delusion, these ethical psychological qualities is rather a modest goal for, you know, in the world of religion, because religions have, you know, wonderful, cosmic, transcendental, ultimate, you know, teachings and goals and all kinds of things that are very, very important. And, but what's brilliant about the Buddha, I think, coming and talking about greed, hate and delusion is that most people agree that this is important. So if some people think that, yeah, these Buddhists they have this minor goal, it's like, it's like, you know, it's kind of a low grade religious goal, you know, we'll put up with the Buddhists You know, they're kind of like, yes, but we agree that greed, hate and delusion is important. But you know, there's more this More have greater goals? Well, that's fine. There's no problem with that. But don't don't ignore. Letting go of your greed, hate and delusion. Don't put up with it so you can go on to this greater goal. You know, most religions agree yes do these things the ethical teachings of most religions are very important. I think what Buddhism what contributes to the to maybe other religions is the encouragement, take, you know, to take those part of the teaching seriously. And then if you really want to do this thoroughly, this eradication of greed, hate and delusion, it really helps to do something like mindfulness, some deep kind of introspection that goes on, so we can really see and feel and know what's going on. And the

advantage of doing this kind of deep introspection is that you become Your own teacher ubik, you you begin to discover what the Dharma is. And in fact, in that there's a wonderful statement, the Buddha said that if you want to know what the Dharma really is, the Dharma that's visible here now. That's immediately available. Then what you should know is you should know, greed, hate and delusion and the experience of having the absence of greed, hate and delusion. If you can see those two things in yourself, having known greed, collusion and knowing that it's disappeared, it's gone. Then you have a first hand direct encounter experience, you know for yourself, what the Buddha was teaching so it's not like that sophisticated. It's not like some, you know, it's not like rocket science, spirituality. And it's a relatively simple teaching.

But it's so powerful because these things greed, hate and delusion, as their roots are so intimately tied to intimately connected to so many of the ways in which people live stressful life, painful lives, so many ways in which people injure themselves, injure themselves, but also so much part of how they injure other people. So much of the harm that we see in the world comes from people's people's, you know, originates in people's greed and their hatred and their delusion. So, Buddhism, at least the teachings of the Buddha keeps over and over again, putting up a mirror saying, Look at this, look at this, look at this. And so if you're, if you hear teachings from Buddhist teachers, or if you're read Buddhist texts, and they keep kind of over and over again, using language of greed, hate and delusion, don't blank out because you hear it so many times. Don't just don't go there they go again, you know, and like you know that. But these are really central important and pivotal and key foundational aspects of the Buddha teachings of the Buddha. And if you think that it's a lesser goal, you know, if you want something more sophisticated, you'll be surprised as the greed, hate and delusion disappear, that you're living in a much more richer, fascinating. I don't know if sophisticated is the right word, but he Better than sophisticated. Then the knowledge, the understanding the peace, the qualities of compassion and care and the things they get born, that arise when the mind is not agitated, from greed, hate and delusion, it's not caught is not preoccupied. It's phenomenal. It's one of the great things and so in Buddhism is considered to be the ultimate possibility. So then I'll end with one quote from the Buddha. He said, If it were not possible to eradicate greed, hate and delusion. I would not instruct you to do so. But it is possible to to uproot greed, hate and delusion, therefore, I instruct you to do so. It is possible. That's the good news. So that's when what I had to say for today. So we have about 10 minutes. If any of you like to ask any questions about this or anything else, you're welcome. So, there,

um, you're talking about ethics. And then it sounds like the Buddha feels you should look and see.

You know, you're talking about ethics and it sounded like yours. saying the Buddha says you should look at yourself and see about greed, hate and delusion. Um, when I think about ethics, or if I like a particular situation, I feel like hey, I'm not at ease with that there's something feels off. It usually feels like there's several different things going on at the same time, like somebody else could make a case for it is okay. You know what I mean? in this in this room, there was something about two weeks ago where I thought some as the teacher gave an example of something another teacher done, and I thought, No, it's not right. And the other teacher giving the talk felt it was okay. It was good. But I didn't think so. So, is the point not to find out what's perfect because we had different ideas. It was a guest teacher. We had different ideas about what's ethical, but is it the investigation into being ethical, that's important

to understand, I think that, well, there's a number of things that are I think, there's a so you know, it's it's what is what someone else says. So I think that there's two major areas to explore. Perhaps one is in yourself, what gets triggered in you? So is there a strong attachment to something? That's excessive the attachment? So attachment is a form of greed. And there's a lot of things people get attached to, to



their opinions. So their idea is what should be what shouldn't be. And so as something like that been triggered, yeah. Is there ill will there's hostility, or is there some kind of aversion to what's been said? And so is that live in you? Or is there delusion? Now, that's the hard one to find out. You know,

I'm doing Yeah. But

it's possible to kind of discover that and find that out. So to do a self check. And that's a really important thing to do. Because why be motivated by act? in this kind of situation, based on those motivations, there's probably caused more harm than good, and probably has no purpose. Really. Yeah. And then the other thing is how do we evaluate evaluate what the person has said? It didn't feel right. It didn't feel harmonious with how I see the world somehow wrong. And, and so you can then try to evaluate that to the best of your ability. And so how do you evaluate that the evaluate against your preferences, your opinions? Or do you have certain criteria for evaluating that what's goes on? And, and so there's no four here I'm sitting here talking about the Buddha. And he offered a series of evaluations to criteria for looking at our ethical behavior that attend to he tended to be a consequentialist. He was very interested in the consequences of things. So that listening to what the opinion was, what are the consequences of that kind of opinion? Is this good? Consequences going to be supportive is not going to be supportive. Is it useful in certain times, but not in other times as opposed to a general statement? So you know, it's just going to be harmful to people to hear this or not. And if you think that it's going to be harmful that they say, if it seems appropriate, you could talk to the person say something. It helps to speak only after you've done yourself check. So that you're kind of clear and clean and how you speak if if there's time for that. Because the Buddha did talk about that, when he did it, praise people who lived by the precepts and encourage others to live by the precepts. So it isn't just a message about just take care of yourself, encouraging others to be ethical is a good thing. And then, so we want to evaluate it is it is it we want to evaluate what people have said. So what criteria do you use to evaluate that. And if you have clear criteria, then you're in a better position to have a conversation with a person. But sometimes we have unarticulated opinions of you just seems wrong. And that is not so productive, have a conversation. But if you have a clear, articulated reasons for why you feel you believe what you believe, that might help the other person to be able to articulate their, you know, the basis of their views. So I don't know if it's helpful or not to the point.

Yeah, it's helpful. Thank you.

I think learning to think ethically, is a useful thing to do. And I think I sit particularly true for the way that we live in a much more complicated interconnected society than the Buddha did. And so we're asked to vote. We have professional ethics we have, we have you know, we have all kinds of ways in which we're asked to or expect To participate in the public sphere of life, that wasn't the case 2500 years ago, you know, there wasn't a question should there shouldn't be death penalty is just the king set off with a head. Yeah. And if you said stop, you shouldn't do that. That'll protest in front of the palace. Yeah, off with your head. Yeah. You know, but now we're at now we vote for these things. And so how do we engage? How do we and you know, involved in ethical decisions, which are not directly connected to ourselves and our own action in the moment. And so this requires a kind of ethical thinking, and be able to think, in a clear, consistent way about the public good. And that becomes much more complicated than the kind of ethics that traditionally historically has been emphasized in Buddhism, which is like my talk today, which was very personal. Thank you.

So,

I work with a lot of people who have a lot of things in their feet, who have a lot of thorns in their feet. And it seems when I talk to them that they're very aware of the thorns in their feet. But then when I try and give them certain advice about how to become more aware of those thorns or do something to change those thorns, I often just see them say like, Yeah, well, okay, and then they just keep kind of stomping around and digging the thorns in deeper. So, I guess like, what advice would you give to people who seem to be aware of the thorns but have a lot of trouble taking action, creating some sort of a habit to actually affect change in themselves.

If in simple and appropriate ways you've tried to support them or help them and they're not receptive to it. I think then probably the best thing you can do is to love them. Be kind to them be supportive, be present in a friendly good way. I think that it's great medicine for people to do receive that and feel that and to feel when they're with you that they feel safe they feel comfortable and appreciate the warmth that you have that lets something deeper kind of subtle and people maybe that can't settle if you know if you're coming like always you should you should be taking your thorns out. And then it might take a little bit you know, it might be seemed like a little counterintuitive or slower but then maybe maybe creates the conditions in a year from now to have a different kind of conversation because they've learned to trust you or feel safe around you. And if they don't have that conversation, it's still good for them.

I'd like to go back to greed, hatred and delusion and No delusion in particular because our greed and hatred seem easier to identify. But there's a little it's a conundrum to say how can one know when when one is diluted? And there's the Catechism that tells us that delusion is not seeing impermanence and unsatisfactoriness and the non self nature of things. But I'm wondering what first if that's a little too Pat, if there's something more to the notion of delusion than just those three characteristics? And second, about the way in which greed, hatred and delusion are interrelated? Would it be possible to eliminate greed and hatred without touching delusion, for example? Nice. So for the second question, hope you can come back and tell us sometime like to know, I think but the First one, in a delusion is hard to see. And but I think this is where strong mindfulness helps a lot. Because maybe it won't show it won't show all delusion. But if you have strong mindfulness and the mind is quiet, steady enough, in order to really see clearly, you can watch the birth of a thought. And if you can really be there and watch a thought appear, chances are you'll recognize a lot of delusion. Because you said, well, that's just a thought. Usually thoughts are in control and they're going along a mile a minute, and we're just barely keeping up with them and they're telling us what's the truth. And you know, which kind of this is how it is. And so, you know, example I've used often is if you're walking down the street and you see a person And we can have all kinds of judgments about people so quickly. And, and, and the seeing and the judgment are so integrated happen together, that we don't really see any difference between the judgment and the person. There's like, all this together. But if you if you can watch the thought be born, then you have a chance to see that the person the thought are two different things. And then you can evaluate the thought, it's a way man so you see someone and that person you see is someone may be the kind of person that you tend to be afraid of, and reminds you of a bully that you had as a child. And, but it's not the bullies just someone has the same physique, right? And so you can see the person you know, you recognize it as seeing and then you see the thought arises But it's just a thought. He said, Well, you know, that's a thought, let me take another book, or that's not the bully. That was a kind of a delusion. That was the assumption that my history is, you know, they're giving me about who that person is. And then because I've taken a moment to take a second look into, you see the recognition of the bias, the thought the judgment is that and you see how it's different than the experience you're looking at. And that in so many different ways, if you can be there as a thought arises, a lot of our thoughts are not worth having. A lot of our thoughts are, you know, not quite right. They're kind of delusion. And, and one of the ones in terms of those three characteristics you talked about, it's possible to actually watch in the

mind, the production of the idea that this is permanent. This is This is always going to be this way. And it's because sometimes it's more like a feeling. And it's kind of like an all this feeling that still could have somehow I know so much better. I know that things are permanent. But my stomach doesn't know that or something inside doesn't know that, like this, this is the feeling inside this is going to be forever You know, and then I tell myself Gail, you know, it's not that but it's some of that it's the some of the emotional responses we have come along with a kind of message. And it's possible to see that message is not quite right. It's kind of diluted so this idea of this is forever feeling is innocent. Oh, you know, I know better. It's, you know, I've had this I've had this feeling before and many times that doesn't last. Thank you. That's really helpful. Right.

So One of the things I really like about this teaching about greed, hate and delusion, it's clearly an, among other things, it's an ethical teaching. And it's in the way that Buddha talks about it. It's clearly an ethical teaching in relationship to oneself and in relationship to others. But the way it's presented, there's no sharp line between the personal world and the interpersonal world. He I think it's fair to say that in many places in our modern Western society, we've ended up in a kind of cultural mindset, where it's, there's a very sharp line for many people, between the personal and the public, the personal and interpersonal and our personal lives and what goes on inside of us is like so Paramount and so big and all that seems to be a case and the 2500 years ago in a very different culture in times of ancient Indian Buddhism. It seems that they didn't, didn't have that very sharp divide between the personal and interpersonal. So that when people were taking care of the personal of eradicating greed, hate and delusion, it was not seen as being separate from taking care of the society and the world around us. Because these, these words so sharply divided as we have. So sometimes when we read and put through the modern lens of modern, in, you know, modernize these ancient texts, sometimes they seem like they're too personal and it's not enough emphasis on the interpersonal world. But if you read carefully see that these are completely you know, what's the right word completely inter interrelated, in a very deep way so interrelated, that it doesn't occur to people back then to separate these two worlds. So thank you.