

Monday sit with instructions, week 4

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As an announcement for today, I won't be offering any practice discussions. In that way, it's a quiet day. And there will be a Dharma talk at 4 o'clock. The Buddha was sometimes associated with miracles. But when the Buddha described what he could do that was truly a miracle, he said... When he has sensations, he knows the arising of the sensations.

He knows that they persist, and he knows that they cease, pass away, disappear. He knows there are recognitions, perceptions, concepts by which things are known, and he knows the recognitions as they arise. He knows. He knows them as they persist, and he knows them as they disappear. And the third miracle is, he knows thoughts as they arise. He knows thinking as it persists.

He knows the disappearing of thoughts. In this sense, our ability to do this is also kind of a miracle, a marvel, a wonder. But we often don't engage the miracle of it because of how we are absorbed in concerns, preoccupations, stories, bundles, knots with our experience. But to step far enough away from the stories to see them as stories, to take a step back from the bundles of self that we create and hold on to, and know it as just a bundle, just an attachment, just an idea, to know that there's a mind with thinking so that we're not pulled completely into the world of thinking, seeing the world together. Through the lens of the thoughts that we have, the stories we have, beliefs we have, this is a miracle. To see clearly.

Maybe to give you an example, if I look down at the clock in front of me, I see the numbers 8, 22. But it's not just numbers. As I see 8, 22, there arises a very subtle movement in the mind that gives a name, a tag, adds something to the present moment. An overlay. It's 822. What is the reality of 822?

Does that really describe this moment now? Is it accurate? You could go around the globe and the same now as we have here, is given a different name, different numbers. So the idea

of time that's added to now, this number 822, it doesn't really point to anything that really exists, but in some kind of way it doesn't not exist either. It's kind of ephemeral, it's kind of empty, it's something that has no weight to it. It's something that arises in a human mind.

As far as I know, animals don't have... We never occur to the blue jays on the property. That's 8 to 22. And with the time comes other sensations. There might be all kinds of ideas in the mind for what that means for you. Thoughts arise... feelings arise, other recognitions arise.

At some point we'll call now 9.15, and that will trigger associations, meanings, ideas. Maybe for you it's now, it means it's time for walking meditation. It's the walking time. The idea of walking time is not pointing to something that really exists. But you can't say it doesn't exist quite. In a sense, walking time arises because of what it says on a schedule.

It arises because you start walking. For some people, it's kitchen time. There might arise the thought, this is your meditation time. But this idea, just an idea, how much substance do you give to it? How much focus? How much concern?

In what way is the mind activated? And is there any pressure or tension? Maybe closer to home, it might arise the idea that you're a meditator. Or accurate would be meditation is happening. Are you really a meditator? Maybe that idea also points to something that neither exists... nor doesn't exist.

It's something ephemeral idea. Or, are you giving solidity to that idea? Holding on to the idea, feeding the idea, making a self a bundle from the idea of being a meditator. In a way, all ideas, all recognitions, in and of themselves, arise, persist and pass. In and of themselves are not something that truly exists, truly real, but they're also not non-existent. They're insubstantial, empty, light, kind of invisible.

But we also give power to them. We make ideas solid. We tense up, have pressure, create knots around the ideas. And those knots, those pressure, those solidity, can be seen as sensations. Simple sensations that arise, persist and pass. Even when they persist, they're not quite there, not quite not there.

Sensations shimmer and oscillate and vibrate and fluctuate and how strong they are. Vanish for an instant return. Sensations do not have an existential existence. So many of them are fleeting. Of course they exist, but of course they don't quite exist because they pass. They fluctuate, they move.

Come and go. You move. You come and go. You appear and disappear, and suffering appears. It arises. It can be so simple that simply the arising of suffering, of course it exists because it arises, but it also passes.

Of course it doesn't exist when it passes. And in between the arising and passing, if you're very quiet, still... You see the dance of suffering, oscillating, fluctuating, appearing and disappearing. You see the recognition, the idea of suffering, as an empty concept, the thoughts about suffering, as ephemeral, nothing you have to be involved in or believe in, be pushed around by. The world of thinking is empty and impermanent, and the raw sensations of suffering come and go. And rather than gathering all these together into one big knot, rather than gathering together sensations, concepts, ideas, thoughts and stories, we sit here in the now, here and now, in the radical simplicity of it, the simplicity of now that can't be defined by a time, a number, we give it, an open, spacious, where the miracle is to know sensations as they arise, persist and pass, to know concepts, ideas, recognitions as they arise, persist and pass, to no thinking as it arises, persists and passes, and in the river of change.

Sensations and even more so ideas, even more so thinking, are like painting with watercolors on the surface of a running river, where everything dissolves back into the flow. And now the clock has a number 9-0-0. What do you have in your mind? What arises? What persists? What falls away in the knowing of it all?

None of it has any solidity. It's all transparent, translucent, empty and vast. There'll be no bell.