

2005-05-02 War on Karma Follow up

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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Good evening. How many of you were here last week? So a good number. I thought that after last week's talk by Thanissaro Bikkhu by the monk, he talks about karma, it might be useful to have some follow up discussion about that. And, and I was encouraged to do that then and, and we could have open discussion about what he said. But I think might be more useful for me, especially since some of you weren't here to try to summarize a little bit what he said and what was controversial about it, and then I could, I could offer you some my views. I was encouraged. by several people to do that. I don't know why that is, but it might be interesting. And before I start, I would like to I was asked, and I would like to mention Doug Douglas wood woods. He's the Australian who was kidnapped in Iraq, I think yesterday in the news today. And he's a good friend of Stephanie and Steve Briscoe, who are very good, very longtime members of our community here. And, in fact, he's the godfather of their son. And Stephanie sends she transcribes the talks that I give here sometimes and I think that's what she meant, but she said that she she's been sending this guy Douglas Woods has so both his wife and his daughter are Buddhist practitioners. And Stephanie's been sending talks from IMC to them. And they asked if IMC would keep Douglas wood in mind these days. And so, you know, those of you that who do metta practice or other ways you might want to keep in your thoughts and your good wishes and wishing well. And I'm struck in saying this you know, the degrees of separation is a term, how, how close everybody is in this world and it's not so far away from, you know, two, three people away from some of the big things happening in the world. And often and communities like this, meditation communities, meditation centers, it's often a place that people come who are trying to deal with some of their some huge degree of suffering trauma. difficulties. And in a sense, perhaps, the people who come maybe here today I don't know about today, but the people who come to meditation center don't exactly represent a cross section of society. But probably, in some ways they do but in some ways, you tend to get a greater degree of suffering in a place like this in people's lives and people's backgrounds. And because it's people who somehow are trying to deal with suffering, sometimes the kind of great suffering, who find these kinds of teachings and practices most helpful for them most useful for them and have the most motivation to really try to come to terms with what they're struggling

with. And quite honestly, not so much surprised anymore because I see it so often, but Often, people come and talk to me on meditation retreats or hear. It often seems like, you know, world events are not so far away, you know, you can read about in the paper far away, and they're not too far away. And I don't have it has happened recently, but in the early 90s when I started teaching, then it seemed like there was a lot of people coming in we did a lot, but it would happen often enough that there were people who were still living with the legacy of world war two people who were children at that time, for example, or in other situations. You know, 50 years 60 years after World War Two, there are still people for whom it's a huge deal, and they're still relating to it. Has it impacted their life ever since? And where they are it's their children who are you know, who still feel the impact. The one of the last retreats I sat there was a person who whose father was was caught after the after Rodney King, the Rodney King riots. So that was, you know, something that was in LA in different places in the country and I read about it as concerned about it and had various feelings about it. But then on retreat that came a person whose father was caught in the Rodney King riots, and he was severely injured, beat up and had a coma and is now alive with you know, severe brain damage. And so that comes to close by for someone who came last year to retreat to was a 911 survivor and was trying to deal with that. And, and there's, you know, you can, everything comes to retreats here. So today with came our way was Douglas would not so far away from ours, our situation right here. And I imagined that the war in Iraq you know, whether you think It should be happening or not happening. Either way, there'll be people who be influenced for this for the next 60 years, if not 100 years, and the way that people were influenced by World War Two and major impact and major degree of trauma and suffering for people for many, many, many generations. And I say that, I partly want to say that, because of the topic I want to talk about today, and talking about Tennessee, Rebecca's discussion of karma is that people come to Buddhist practice. Some people come because the stakes are pretty high, it's very meaningful. And the potential of practice is quite powerful. It's quite deep in helping people get to the very roots of human suffering. And the corollary of that, of course, is the possibility of peace and happiness, possibility of liberation. And so it certainly Anyway, so that was kind of like a little bit of a background and kind of set maybe a little bit of context of talking about karma. So we don't talk about it too philosophically, you know, too abstractly, as if it's some kind of, you know, you know, philosophical topic, that's, you know, we can just move ideas around. And it just seems very interesting and whatever. So, what Thanissaro Bikkhu said last week, within the main main trust of his talk, and was the title of his talk, was the war on karma. And he had this idea, he said, He's noticed that a number of Western Buddhist writers and teachers, most teachers have a critical view about what he understands the Buddhist view of karma and, and he went through some of the different arguments and the different critiques that people have had about the teachings of karma and I don't remember all of them here. But he actually gave me notes exactly what he said. So I'd know what to say today. We've been we've been since since he gave a talk last week. He's been staying with me. So we've had lots of discussions about this topic and, and, you know, kind of debating back and forth and, you know, not exactly seeing eye to eye, it's been very fascinated to have a discussion with him. And, you know, we may be nice to pet discussions could have been happening publicly, you would have seen some interesting at least, maybe I would have had some allies. And so, he's a friend of mine. And so, you know, it's, it was it was very interesting way of, you know, having conversations. So I don't

remember all of it. I didn't bring those notes. Keep notes he gave me for this stuff. But the but then For example, 111 idea My critique of the Buddhist idea of karma is that, oh, it's just come some kind of quaint kind of, or kind of particular worldview or teachings from ancient India that somehow the Buddha picked up or is or Buddhist picked it up after the Buddha is not really essential to Buddhism, it's something that belongs to India, and we could easily leave it behind take out the essence of Buddhism. Some of the critique, I think, was that it's not logical doesn't make sense. You know, for example, with the teaching of, of not self, some people say, well doesn't make any sense. If you haven't, there's no cell, then what is it that gets reborn was one of the questions someone asked. And so it doesn't make sense. So there's the whole thing doesn't make any sense. And what are some of the other arguments seek members? Anybody remember who was there last week, from the critiques of karma that he critiqued? Yes. Yes, there's no real empirical evidence for it. For some people remember any other right fatalistic excuse for maintaining the status quo, that part of the idea? You see it very clearly, sometimes in the caste system in India where people are born into certain caste, and they're stuck in that caste and they can't be any social mobility. And part of the depression now for that is that, oh, it's their karma. They were born there, and they have to play out their karma. So it's, it's, you know, it's my karma to be the landlord and your karma to be the serf of my plantation. And, and, you know, that's just, you know, the way the universe was built, and you just have to, you know, deal with your karma and then maybe another lifetime you'll do better. Yes, please. Thank you. Writers critique. So a critique of action. That action has real in terms of the real consequence it has sets up momentum in life. That's what you do now has results. And some people in ancient India. I don't think I've said here, but in ancient India, believe that action has no results. There's no karmic results if you do something now, I mean, certainly if I knock over the glass, the rock, the rug floor, under the rug will get wet. But, but, you know, there's no karmic results. You know, if I knock it over in anger, then it isn't that that anger will come back in terms of some kind of fruit in the future in terms of some kind of retribution, karmic retribution. So, you know, he critiqued various teachers or people in the West about teachings of karma, and he didn't bring it up. I don't think he brought it up, but in the room was a tricycle interview from maybe 10 years ago or something. years ago was a Buddhist magazine called tricycle. There was a debate between Stephen bachelor and Robert Thurman. And now and that was an Steven bachelor's, that's point presented himself as an agnostic around the teachings of rebirth. And Robert Thurman insisted that you cannot be a Buddhist without believing in rebirth. The unfortunate thing was that these were the people who believe in Buddha electrician idea of rebirth. The unfortunate thing about that article was it about Thurman did a really bad job, presenting his point of view. So it wasn't really a good debate. In that sense, probably someone he could have done a better job. So there was but there was an ambiguity or confusion. In the talk that Taan Geoff gave last week, in my mind, I listened to it and, and the conclusion had to do with two sides. So two aspects of who different aspects of the teachings on karma. The first aspect was that which is makes a lot of sense. And I think most people, very few people would disagree with this part of his teaching of karma. And then as to do that karma has to do with the idea that your actions, especially your intentional actions that you do you perform are consequential. That what you do set certain things in motion that has results. So, for example, so, for example, he likes to do something like learning a craft or learning a musical instrument. If you want to learn a musical instrument, you have to believe that your effort is

going to make a difference, that your actions make a difference. If you if you had no faith or confidence that practicing the scales over and over over again, was gonna make a difference and learning to play the musical instrument, then you wouldn't do it. But you have some faith that you fish Keep practicing practicing, that that has results into the future. And, and any skill that you want to develop, there has inherent in wanting to develop that skill, it needs to be some confidence that practicing the skill, cultivating and taking the action will bear fruit and as you develop that skill gets strengthened. And in some situations, our confidence is an invisible thing. We just feel we have enough confidence we just do it. And in some things that we do confidence is a big deal. We don't have enough confidence, I don't I can't really do that. And then we do something. I write something recently for a friend that's gonna be forward for a little book. And, and I thought, you know, I don't have to write a foreword to a book. And I have nothing to say and I'm done. You know not to go back over my memory of this person and what he wrote and read it and if they make some sense out of it, and I can't That's too hard and, and you know, I had no confidence in it sets. And those kinds of thoughts were going through my mind. And so then I sat down and started writing, I used to write some writing, the first sentence was silly, and I moved it to the bottom of the page and started writing something else. And pretty soon I just kept writing and writing and writing pretty soon This piece was was written and, and did come out of me. And so the confidence was not there. And if I list my lack of confidence was lack of confidence initially. And partly, and if I listened to it too strongly, I wouldn't even have sat down. And but by sitting down and just practicing and doing something was born. So this plays itself out with doing Buddhist practice. Buddhist practice, traditionally, is a practice of cultivation, both cultivation and letting go. You're developing skills of developing the mind, developing a variety of things, including developing a meditative mind, the mind the concentrated the mind, that can be mind The mic and that can incite the mind. And you're also learning skills and letting go during to recognize what it's useful to let go of. And a lot of, for example, meditation practice involves letting go of things which gets in the way of concentration and mindfulness. And people can develop skills with that. Some of those skills come from to maturity, you understand the world of the mind, you get really familiar with your mind, and understand how it works. You understand the tricks of it used and the nature of it, you understand the value of letting the mind engage in certain things, not other things, you understand that? You know, if I start sitting here and meditation and start planning, the great American pizza cookbook. I mean, maybe America needs a pizza cookbook, but it's probably not a great values while you're sitting with meditate. And so you see that, you know, you've written Mexican cookbooks and Chinese cookbooks and, you know, in your mind, you really have to a while, you know, this is really a waste of time. And so I let go of that next time I sit down, I think I'm not going to do a cookbook. Now, some people it takes, you know, a few years of, you know, meditation to realize that certain kind of train of thought is not useful. Let's stop that. Some people are much quicker on the uptake. And they learn, okay, I can let go of this. I don't think about that. And, and there's more important things to do in meditation, then, you know, follow the train and the preoccupations of my mind. So skills and learning to let go partly partly comes from familiarity, partly comes from working, doing the practice and getting some confidence. So this makes a difference and really seeing the results. Oh, really, if I do this, then something happens. My mind gets stronger. There's beneficial results. Sometimes you see it immediately. And sometimes you see it down the line, maybe, you know, in a year or 10 years, or maybe in a crisis. Perhaps you

didn't realize that in doing practice here, doing meditation practice, you were cultivating seeds of patience. Every time there was an itch to rise, or something more dramatic, and you didn't react on it. You're developing capacity to be nonreactive. Being being patient in situation of enduring it, and you come to some huge crisis in your life, and you have the ability to kind of step back and watch that or not react. And you see, wow, I really find it some good seeds. And those seeds now reveal the sprouting for me in this crisis London. So it said that it is very important to have confidence for Buddhist practitioners, it's very important to have confidence that their actions make a difference. And that in having confidence, then becoming wise and choosing what actions you we undertake that act you know, if you go out and lie and steal, that that has, you know, those actions have consequence and they produce very different results. Then if you practice generosity or practice being honest, and so there has to be so so the more confidence we can have their actions make a difference, the more we're careful with our actions and this is a fundamental Buddhist kind of teaching. It's one of puts a tremendous emphasis on personal responsibility for our spiritual development our spiritual well being and no one else is going to do the practice for us just as just as no one else is going to be for us. So, no one else is going to learn to meditate for us right same kind of thing. So that part of what dentistry characterize relevant that part of this talk Okay, so that part of it is not so controversial. You can you can't have it's possible to have spiritual critique or that kind of teaching also, some some teachers have non dual traditions Advaita Vedanta, for example, and some teachings of Zen sometimes will have some problems with that kind of teaching. But it's pretty straightforward. And Taan. Geoff said that, that kind of learning to differentiate your actions between what is helpful and not helpful, skillful and not skillful, which is so essential to the Buddhist tradition is really very fundamental the human mind how it works. And he said, Well, would you rather have a surgeon who sees no dualities, or surgeons going to operate in your brain or a surgeon who can differentiate between what is helpful and not helpful? And not a dualistic surgeon or non dualistic surgeon? So he said, I'm not sure you know, you know, it's it kind of makes a good point, but there's probably more to it than he admits. Now that more so that's all seems very clear now and I was listening to him last week at some point. Without it didn't seem to me like it was a clear transition say okay, there's this and then there's this was like, Kind of it kind of morphed into kind of like and this rebirth that you have some of you had that experience before that come from suddenly it always makes sense and is now suddenly he's talking about rebirth. And as if it's logical logic logic kind of naturally follows from what he was talking about first. So it so I think there's two different things he's talking about, or it can be two things it can be differentiated. One is a very simple, straightforward, almost empirical idea of action and its results. And the other is the teaching of rebirth. Often in Buddhism, those are not separated clearly and cleanly. And so maybe it's not so maybe it's not essential or necessary or important. Maybe you shouldn't separate them. But in my mind, I separated them listening to him. And other was useful because when he started mentioning some of the criticisms of karma What it sounded like to me was he was that the people who are criticizing karma, were criticizing the first part of karma. The part about action hasn't having results. And I think he was confused, confusing or confusing himself. And the most of the people I've heard, who somehow or other has some critique or some problem with the Buddhist idea of maybe karma is is not with a theory of action. But rather it's with the idea of rebirth. And this idea of rebirth that people will say, Oh, that is, you know, and then he went through some of these arguments.

And some people say, well, that's just an ancient Indian idea. And, you know, that somehow was part of the Buddhist environment at a time and they would adopted it, you know, why wouldn't he just, he's part of his culture, so that his cultural context, you know, you'd kind of take on the beliefs of your time and place or as many other kind of critiques of it And that's what I thought some of you started having some hesitation in going along with what he was saying. And then the questions answer period. He that came up very clearly about the rebirthing. And he did a really poor job answering those questions, and which he acknowledged privately afterwards. And so that kind of added to the depth of difficulty for us, you know, because he was really tired and it was hard for him. But one of the questions was, oh, he offered a kind of a kind of a version of Pascal's Wager, I thought, in that Pascal's Wager is if there is a God and you act as if there's a God, it's for your benefit. If there is no God, and you act as if there's a God. You're playing it safe. In case there is one Right, someone once said something like, God would never forgive someone for playing the odds. It says, more or less Pascal's Wager, some of you know it right. So, the Buddhist one which the Buddha gives kind of a similar one in the suit does, where it Buddha says, if there is rebirth, and you live accordingly, living a good life and like a practice, that's for your benefit in future lives, if there is no rebirth, but you live as if there is that's also for your benefit in this life. And so you don't really go wrong. So you might as well so Taan Geoff interprets that I think dentistry Bhiku as you might as well adapt the adopt the idea of vigor, even if you don't believe it, adopted as a working hypothesis, because it's for your benefit. And that so he had someone asked like, how is it for my benefit? How do I do that? And that's where he gave the worst answer of all at the evening. Just like it didn't make any sense. That's my sense. But he said, and, and I tried to ask him during the week about that, and the best that I could get from him was that is that a catch at least harder to try to say here also some of this is that if a person's on their deathbed, what is going to keep them practicing as diligently as they can, to the last minute, the last moment, rather than taking morphine and kind of numbing out and avoiding a pain and kind of, you know, dying, a unconscious life, unconscious death. And for in his point of view, it's the teaching of rebirth, which gives the person the idea of rebirth that give it a comeback, which would be sufficient motivation for person to hang in there. Practice as long as possible in order to potentially possibly attain Nirvana or goes foreign practices when you can. And if you don't believe in rebirth, there's not a sufficient motivation to adapt, you know, in times that that kind of difficulty, or that kind of pain to practice all the way. That's the best argument that I heard from him. His best attempt to try to argue why it's important to believe that to act as if it's true, even if you don't believe it. The but then, you know, if you don't believe in rebirth, if you don't think it's true, you know, why adopt that when there's a lot of you know, there's a lot of different teachings of rebirth. I told him that, you know, it's probably not even the Christian idea makes just as much sense as the Buddhist one. We had no, no, it doesn't make any sense. They Because Because this idea of eternal damnation doesn't make any sense. You know, that's, you know, you don't get a second chance that doesn't make any sense. And it turned out in the conversation, that he has some idea that what makes sense that the universe needs to make sense. And his way of making sense of unit Parkway is it has to be some kind of system of justice. And so that the Christian idea has no you know, real justice because there's no possibility of retribution or rehabilitation or something. This is a nice idea, like always good to have the ability. And now, tennis or a baker when he's offering all this is offering it for him in a very traditional, terrible world worldview. He spent 30 or 30 years ago, he was In

Thailand, he spent he has been in Thailand, since he was quite a young man. And he was really, I think he's really, I don't know how to say entered into or either that or you already had a worldview and tap into the Theravada worldview really fit his into the whole worldview that he's the he fits into. And so in the background, what he was presenting to you to last week was a big, very large worldview, which is very different from the worldview here in the West. And as you begin kind of asking questions or pursuing what he's saying, the worldview begins to become larger and larger than more and more aspects to it. And, in a sense, as more and more things and you start you starting to be asked to believe in kind of on faith, if you really want to enter that worldview, someone's presenting themselves This is important, this is important, then pretty soon there's a huge worldview that's kind of behind that. And so what do we do you know, people in the west to or not didn't grew up in that worldview, perhaps How do they then relate to these kind of traditional Buddhist teachings? And, and how do we negotiate that it's a real challenge, you know, how do we do it in a way where we stay true to ourselves or have some sense of integrity in what we do? So that when we when we adopt a belief, we do it because it really is we believe in some deep way that makes sense, as opposed to just out of faith to our teachers, which is tradition or something else. So what am i one of my views around all this topic is that the teaching on action, their action, I think, is very important. And I think that it's a very, I think, it can be rendered very prevented, somewhat simple, simple way like I did, but there's a lot behind it. And it's quite a sophisticated teachings of the Buddha. It's very deep, and it's very profound that he organized his spiritual teaching around theory of action. And I thought, tennis yubico last week did a brilliant job presenting that side of the Buddhist teachings. So that I think is great. That part then the part about rebirth. I actually don't care. I don't care whether someone believes in it so much. And I do sense that I want to support people and understand where they're coming from. And I want to, you know, respect people and all that and work with their understanding their beliefs, and, but I don't, it doesn't have to be that important for me. Whether someone believes in rebirth or not, and that's so important for me. It is important for me if I feel that their belief in rebirth is getting in the way of their liberation, the freedom to initiate a big coup, I felt that that he was quite confident in his worldview. The idea of rebirth is bad news. The idea of rebirth is bad news and sense that, you know, you've been reborn as part of the worldview as it gets bigger is that you've been reborn not just 10,000 times not 10 million times than that amount of times you've been reborn born is astronomical, in the Buddhist worldview, traditional one and, and the beautiful the kind of poetic way it said and then suit us is the amount of tears you have shed in all your lifetimes is greater than all the ocean, all the water and all the oceans. Pretty big. You've been crying a long time. And, and maybe if you maybe if you step back and think of ancient India, where there was you know, the medicine was very different is today and you know, people often died in childbirth and you know, just tremendous amount of suffering. def could be of getting reborn when when most of the chat and chats will get when you get born is to become into a world with a lot of suffering. And oh, I got to do this 10 million, you know, hundred million times more, please, I don't want to kind of go through the struggles and difficulty again and again. So people have a tremendous struggle. It's often happens in religious. It's been pointed out by by philosophers of religion for scholars of religion, that people who see no hope in this life will often create a religion where the hope exists in the future life. And I don't know if that's a fair characterization of some of the teachings of Buddhism. But you certainly see that that is tremendous stealing or just being reborn

human life time after time. is is you know, there's some pleasure in it and some happiness in it but ultimately, just drag and tennis Rubik also believes not only a drag for us, but it's also a drag. On the world around us, because he used the word we're consumers, we're all of us are consumers, and we're all kind of eating each other basically. And the best thing to do for the environment for every life in the world is not to come back and consume more, you know, kind of leave people alone Don't cause more damage than we do. So the idea of rebirth, then for him is very motivating. And for him, it's motivating. Because of that one, he's really motivated to get off the wheel of rebirth. And because of that, he really wants to practice as strongly and deeply as he can to attain full liberation. That's, that's really what he's at. So you can step off the wheel. And that's a very beautiful, you know, very, very profound teaching of, of traditional Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism. And I certainly have a lot of respect for anybody who wants to hold that view. It's not a view that I want to disparage in any kind of way. But The so Taan Geoff thinks it's very important to believe in rebirth, because that's going to give us a sufficient motivation to do the hard work of getting liberated. Because it's one thing to get a little bit liberated. But to really go all out, you know, he's a monk after all right to go all out and devote your whole life to it takes a tremendous motivation. And you need some kind of vision or some kind of something to really get the spark going. And for him, the idea of getting off the wheel is that spark. So you know, then you'd really practice really hard because you don't want to come back. Other However, what he didn't say, maybe because he hasn't seen it hasn't recognized it. But for some people, the idea of rebirth is a constellation is actually Oh, I get to try again. Or it's not so bad, you know. And actually, I don't have to practice I don't have to practice so hard to get here. I'll just do enough so I can get reborn in a better circumstance left next next lifetime. I'll practice then then I'll get around to it. You know, so what was it? You know, it was it was at Augustine who said, you know, give me chastity but not now. So, you know, you know, you know, give me chastity gave me celibacy. But next lifetime. So there are so that's you know, so the teaching re birth can also be seen as a way of putting off practice for some people. And perhaps if people felt this is the only life they have, then in some ways, if this is the only chance you have, maybe I've now I should really go for it and really go as far as I can. So you know, what actually is motivating for different different different things motivate different people. And he was kind of assuming that, you know, this is what his idea is, this is what really motivates people in the most. So to back up a little bit, so my view that I've most mostly want to share with you is that it's not important for me, one way or the other. If people would like to believe it, or they believe in it. Some people feel like they know Some people say that they've had past life experiences or memories. And so they feel like or they've had some kind of sexual experience in life where, you know, something really seems like powerful evidence, this is really the truth. This is really the way it is. And I remember once listening to audio tape of this of a Sri Lankan man, he was quite young, when the tape tape his name he was when he started talking was three or four or five years old. He apparently was able to chant these traditional Pāli chants, supposedly without ever being introduced to them. And when scholars upali listened to them, they said the accent or the dialect in which he chanted, was one from 1000 years ago, or more, and the way he spoke it then, and so this was to be noted, the fact that he even knew these things were so phenomenal. And then the fact that he had this accents, you know, or dialect, but that was also quite phenomenal. And so that's kind of how those kinds of examples are supposed to be stored. You know, of the people who've assembled kind of books of, you know,

evidence of rebirth. So some people feel the evidence is there. And some people feel that the evidence doesn't stand. People looked into it. And that's all a matter of discussion argument. I don't know if anybody's kind of come to a final conclusion. They're still arguing about evolution. So it'll take a while. But for me in the way I was introduced to Buddhist practice, on all my teachers, I practice with a practice a lot of teachers, American teachers, Western teachers, and Asian teachers in Japan, and Thailand and Burma, and in Nepal. And none of them ever asked me whether I believed in rebirth or not. And none of them ever implied that I needed to. They just worked so hard they was offered the practices and encouraged us to practice the best we could Really sometimes you really kind of need a tremendous encouragement to practice deeply and strongly. And, and that was never asked to do that part of Buddhism. And in that famous Stephen bachelor, Robert Thurman debate, Bob Thurman also says as a review that unless you believe in rebirth, you're not going to have the sufficient motivation to practice. Now, is that the case? Maybe it's true, maybe, maybe it's true. But I've known plenty of people who, for whom the idea of rebirth is not the motivating force for doing a practice. And those people have been phenomenally dedicated. You know, kind of made it their life's work in a sense, to do practice and really goes deep and as far in the path of liberation as they as they can. So I don't, I've never felt the need one way or the other, to address people on this topic. I don't feel you know, it's not important one for me, whether people believe it or not, I don't feel as a teacher that I need to present that is something that's, you have to believe in. It's a very central part of classic Buddhism, or traditional or mainstream Buddhism, whatever Buddhist teachings. And I'm very, I want to be very respectful of those teachings. And I'm in phenomenal all of the Buddha, the more I practice, and the more my own practice is developed, the more I'm just in awe of this man 2500 years ago, and what he was able to discover and systematize and work out. And sometimes I think, you know, he, he able, the things that I've been able to see that, you know, are true of what he's taught. It's so phenomenal. He could figure this out. That I kind of say, let me just give him the benefit of doubt for the rest You know, someone who has this level of ability and capacity and some of them had had that feeling and sometimes I don't. And we are so I love to four minutes for you. For us it was mostly one to have a discussion today about all this. It's a maybe it was a wise not to leave any time. But what do you think? What would you like to say? How do you How would you like to follow up a website or anything else out of the last week that you'd like to bring up? Yes, please. Um, so one thing he did say was, he didn't want to talk about what it was. It was Born, which I found kind of interesting part of his discussion. Yeah, I started remember that part of the conversation afterwards. And, and I probably I think I maybe I heard Robert remember I remember quite run with, I think the way he heard the question was more like, who gets reborn? The person who asked who was the person who asked that question here and and, and so he heard more like who gets reborn and that's not the who is not interesting question but if you ask them what is reborn then you get some of the more interesting question answers the that resco teacher children Trungpa he said what gets reborn is your bad habits. And there's some some kind of stuff. So there's a background for him saying that and that is that the moment That what gives momentum to rebirth is the habits of the mind to cling to hold on. And you can even hold on to skillful things useful thing of wholesome things, good things, as long as you're clinging, having momentum to cling, then that momentum is what carries something into the next life. What that exactly is, is, you know, I have a PhD in Buddhism, I tried to look into this. And the best, you know, you know, and I will

say, I understand this too. Well, you know, that I can speak for Buddhism, but I've never had a satisfactory answer about what is it that gets reborn? The best answer that I have so far is that it's kind of like the waves in the ocean. If you have you know, if there's a big wave that comes from Japan to California, you say, well, there's there's the wave and you can kind of track the wave as it goes across. But actually, no water is moving across the ocean. It's more like the water particles go up and down, and they strike the water particle next With Nicole's up and down, and so it's like the wave in amphitheatre, you know, people's hands go like this and there's no hands that you know, are moving around the amphitheater, but it looks like movement, right? So there's certain kind of momentum or spin that in our lives, and that's spin of the spin of clinging or the spin of our actions or behavior in the past, whatever we've done, influences that spin. And that spin incense strikes the next consciousness, is it consciousness which travels? Is that what it is from one moment to the next? Or is it that consciousness is often described as what is it that gets transferred? But is it is it conscious is not a thing? It's more like a wave. So you know, it's so it's like this consciousness strikes next and so I'm sure that people have been tried to do a better explanation or no, I think they have a better explanation but with the rather than thinking of a what it's more like there's probably process and what is it a substrate that carries that process? That's the key. It's really difficult for Buddhists to point to, but, but there's just this momentum, this process that continues. And once you let go of clinging thoroughly enough, there's no more momentum to create the next step. And that's something you can see here, even your own life, right. The certain activities of the mind are self perpetuating. And sometimes you it's drops it stops and doesn't continue. And, and, and, you know, and so that sometimes it can be quite liberating to have is finally stop. That's adequate. Yes. The concept of rebirth being a motivating factor for you to advance your practice. Sounds to me a lot like a version, that you're being averse to being reborn. And that's, you know, that aversion is what's driving you to do your practice, which seems like well, if there is my problem in itself, there, yes, there might be a version in it. But the practice is self purifying. If there is a version, that sooner or later as you practice that that version has to be settled out or purified. And then and then then the question then is, can there still be enough motivation after you've been purified of your version? And, and I, you know, I don't know, I don't have any evidence, you know, that but I think there can be. I think that if i think i think that if a person is suffering, a person can have the motivation to relieve that suffering, without there being aversion to that suffering and to be motivated to relieve that relief. Suffering can be quite a healthy and natural or an eighth movement of the of the heart or the mind, I have the view that the drive towards liberation or freedom is inherent within us or in us. And that if a person is sensitive enough to what is shy, quiet voices inside, that you'll feel that there's this momentum or this drive or this desire this wish or this calling for liberation for freedom. And I have a very, maybe reductionistic explanation for this, which are given here sometimes. And that is, if you've done this before, you don't have to participate, but you could support the other people that haven't been doing participating in this. And that is make a really hard fist and not so much you have to go to the hospital afterwards and make it really hard. Okay, really, really hard. And you're doing the hard and hard enough, really so you take away Try to hold it. Okay, let's keep taking it hard keep it this way, and I'll tell you not to. Okay. So in India, if you want to capture a monkey, you take a coconut, and you make a slitted. You tie the coconut to a tree, and you put a candy inside the coconut, the coconuts tied to a tree, and the monkey

comes along, and the monkey puts its hand into the slit when it grabs the candy, right? He holding to this tight as you were before. Really. And then and then. And then because it's greedy. It goes, You know, I can't get his hand out any more because it's a slit right? Like this. And so because the screen doesn't look like it's candy. The hunter comes along just picks up the monkey. Okay, you can let go now. And now in order to keep your fist that tight, did you have to kind of reassert yourself periodically. Wasn't a kind of like a natural movement to kind of let go release clinging to effort and work and innate in the clinging of the fist is a clinging wants to be released. And so any kind of clinging within us, wants to be liberated wants to be released because it's painful and suffering, that's the momentum that it wants to go. So it's my view, it's it's that's inherent in all of us, this moment of liberation. And if a person is sensitive enough, they realize it's to their own best interest really is it's a motivation that's there for all of us. That sensitivity, mindfulness, sensitivity, compassion, all that, that can come from this life here can provide a tremendous impetus and power for practice, independent of any believing or not believing in rebirth. And so that's my that's a view that I have. It's a view which I think some of the traditional teachers like Bob Thurman, for example, doesn't share because he feels you need to something extra, something more to get you motivated. And that's something more is the belief in rebirth. So I hope this has been useful. It's, it's, you know, I kind of wish we didn't have to talk about it. But given that that was brought up this way, the last week, I thought, and now, what Tanisha is very interested in having done is having had talk last week transcribed. And I thought that'd be interesting for me, because if it was transcribed, then I can actually track the arguments of his much better and that would help me in my next conversations with him. But he wants to I think he wants to turn it into an article, in which case I would probably help him because, you know, he has to kind of contend with, you know, with me. So, if anybody He would be interested in transcribing last week's talk. That would be very nice, I think then both of us would appreciate it. So, those of you who are brand new here and never came to me before, I don't even know what Buddhism is Hartley's checking it out, you know, just maybe you forget you're here tonight. And try it again next week.