

# 2007-12-09 Zen And Vipassana

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## SPEAKERS

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On a fairly regular basis, people who come to me and asked me around, ask me about my my experience with practicing both the Zen Buddhism and Vipassana or Theravada Buddhism. And some people would like to have more of a philosophical contrasting of the two like to see what the differences are and similarities. And some people would like to know more personally for me what it's like for me why I chose one over the other. Why did I switch? Why did I leave Zen and take Vipassana instead? That's the assumption people have. And it happens a lot and generally I'm pretty shy to answer to those kinds of questions, partly because the answer is not in quick, simple terms, and it also because in comparing Zen and Vipassana, there are different schools of thought in different schools of the past. And so you have to kind of differentiate which schools we're talking about, make general statements about, then chances are, they're not going to be so accurate. There's Rinzai Zen and Soto Zen and different schools.

And so what I'd like to do today is to answer this question by giving you partly my story around both in my biography, my, my life went through all this. It was my kind of my practice story. And I do this with a little bit of reluctance for two reasons. One is that you might be inclined, some people might be inclined to compare themselves to my particular path and how it went on for me. And that would be unfortunate because everyone's gonna have their own way. This just happened to be my peculiar way. And, and the other reluctance is that there is a shyness, sometimes in Buddhist tradition, are people talking about themselves too much, but I think there's some wisdom to that. Especially maybe in our culture where building up the self can be such a big thing individual and, and sort of focus on the self and one individual person, their experiences maybe gives can give long message about what the point of practices. They're supposed to become somehow unique or special or something. But I hope that the benefits of giving this talk outweigh the problems.

So, as many, many of you know, I started off in the Zen tradition. And before then even, I first first became interested in Buddhism when I was 19. And the initial interest was relatively intellectual, though, heartfelt enough. It was. I was a college student, and I was potentially draftable into the Vietnam War, and I was a pacifist and in my pacifist beliefs, I felt that pacifism wasn't being passive. It I felt like I had to be able to be willing to put myself actively the act of civil disobedience, acts of civil disobedience that the Vietnam War was going on. And the opportunity was college students were getting killed in America, their protest to the war, and I thought it may be to live by my beliefs, I would have to someday put myself on the line, my life on the line. And I recognized that I was afraid of dying. And I didn't know if I could follow through on my, my nonviolent activist beliefs. So I cast about for something that would help me with dealing with that kind of fear of death. And some reason I don't know. I kind of thought Oh, Buddhism has something to say about that. And the other reason is attraction to Buddhism was I was born again environmentalist, in college. In the books, the Limits to

Growth, had just come out and the oil spill in Santa Barbara had just happened, I went to school in Santa Barbara, UC Santa Barbara, Big Oil Spill down there. The year before I got there the students burned the Bank of America. So it was kind of an active time. And so I was a born again environmentalist. And as we studied these things in college, one thing led to from environmental studies when it came to Political Studies, thinking we have to fix the politics. And from Political Studies, we came to studying what we called consciousness. The basic kind of worldview that people will live by, there's something very deep in people's psyche had to change, not just politics. And that led to being interested in eastern thought, which was kind of, you know, popular in those circles in that time. And with that came the interest in Buddhism. So that's my initial interest.

And when I was 19, I didn't start practicing regularly until I was about 21. At that time, I'd been introduced to meditation, and I'd read Zen Mind Beginner's Mind by Suzuki Roshi. And when I read that book, it kind of spoke to me was like a book that's, you know, speaking my own thoughts kind of thing. And it really was very important for me. The first chance I had, I went to San Francisco Zen Center, and was introduced to the practice there, which was also very meaningful for me. And I know this is something I want to do with my life what I want to do, but I dropped out of college, and a few other things and I've had a number of loose threads in my life, age of 20, 21. And now that I have to kind of tie up those loose ends. And so I spent three years tying up those loose ends and doing after the first of those three years, I went back to college to finish college. And then I started practicing every day. Zen Meditation I did it twice a day, 40 minutes each day, except for Sunday, because the San Francisco Zen Center they don't sit zazen on Sunday. So that makes sense. Day off. And so twice a day, and in what prompted me to start my regular practice like that was that I was suffering. I know it was rather intellectual things about pacifism or environment and all that. It was just, you know that it was, I was socially awkward. I had my own anxiety, guilt, various variety of things. And I felt like I needed to address this. And so I finished my college at UC Davis with a very strong regular sitting practice twice a day. There was a sitting group that I went to twice a week, small sitting group. And every one of the remarkable things that happened to me during the first few months of sittings, zazen regularly is that the reasons for sitting, meditating disappeared, they fell away all this my dealing with my suffering, my neurosis and all that. It wasn't like my suffering went away exactly the neurosis went away. But somehow it wasn't motivating the same way. I wasn't motivated. This is why I'm sitting there to fix this whole stuff. And I thought it was really strange, that I was meditating continuously, twice a day, without a reason. And I'm kind of rational kind of guy. So, you know, this is strange, and I should have a reason but I kept sitting, you know, sitting and sitting on my butt. Why am I doing this? And, and at some point, after some months, I came to understanding that I was meditating, because it was a form of self expression, just as the way an artist with paint or sculptor needed to express herself or himself.

Around this time, I was also visiting San Francisco Zen Center communities, one day sittings and radically. And I noticed that when I hung out there, that it was very helpful for me, because I still had these social games that I was playing, you know, that trying to present myself as always trying to be seen in certain ways, trying to impress, impress people. And when I tried to play those games at the Zen center, there's some of the more senior practitioners there. I felt they were mirrors for me, it was it bounced right back at me. Basically, they didn't, they didn't play the game. And it was kind of painful to have the mirroring but I really value with this is really good. I want to get that help. So then when I finished college, I was really motivated to move to the Zen center and get the support from that community. In this quest, I had to try to bring it into the rest of my life.

So results and for me, it was a form of expression that had expressed something very deep within me, and so the point of me of Zen Meditation was not to get anything for anything, you know, in a particular way, when more in a sense of just to be present and let something be present, be flow, just be there,

certain kind, and I call that time I called it in, there was a sense of integrity. With my meditation practice, there's a place where I felt the most integrity, most authentic and if we settled, relax, know that. And this was very meaningful for me, for its own sake. At some point in those two years of college, continuing this way, I began feeling that it was relatively rather arbitrary. The line between sitting in meditation and daily life, and I wanted to take that in density or that integrity, live with my life as well. And that became my quest for a long time, not to go deeper meditation, but rather to get a sense like to meditate. In the way of being a meditation spill out into my daily life.

And so I went to live there in 1978. And then first I lived right next door to zen center nearby, work through the Tassajara Bakery. And then I went to Green Gulch farm for a while. And residency from there with Tassajara, the Zen monastery. Each of those steps was really a desire to try to make this experience of Zazen and this sense of integrity, a fuller part of my life. So maybe, so that I was living it completely as much as I could. So it wasn't so much a desire to go deeper into meditation as it was, whatever was happening meditation, which wasn't that deep from what I was gonna happen. I was enough for me it was just going deep wasn't the point. The point was, is integrity and part of the sense of integrity, I think for me was, was an understanding that Zen practice was about an unconditional acceptance of what was. What's happening this present moment. So whatever is going on, it wasn't a matter of fixing it or getting better or improving myself or attaining something. But it was to have a full meeting, just to meet this experience without resistance, without desire and grasping, without trying to push it away, without getting caught up in my thoughts about it or whatever. But just to be able to have this full meaning, presence, here, just now.

So that was my sense of practice. And it turned out that this Soto Zen teaching that I got was very akin to that, partly there was a there was a mutuality of learning from those teachings and had my own experience of that. And so it was very valuable for me to kind of just sit there and I didn't know anything about concentration or mindfulness and all the different things can happen in meditation and I was really fortunate, I was really fortunate. Because if I'd known all the things that could happen meditation, I would have been measuring myself and trying and huffing and puffing and I probably would have given up and done something else with my life. But I didn't know any of that. And so I was just naive enough to just to sit with what was. Not trying to make a difference, just be present for what was there.

And, you know, I sat many, many months, years of sitting there with Zen practice and meditating. And a lot of it was painful. Some of it was quite, quite wonderful, the whole range of things. But in some ways, the difficult parts of meditation practice were the most beneficial for me, because when I was sitting with physical pain or emotional pain or whatever, and just being present for it, learning how to be present for it, without any idea to be any different. It was a kind of a purification and cleansing and emptying process, a deepening, a sense a bit of a deeper deeper connection to some feeling of just just being alive is enough, just being, a beingness. And rather than trying to attain something, get something, just to be. And you know much of that experience was not so pleasant for me, I had my neurosis, I had my different difficulties. And slowly in that fire, one of the things that seemed to happen is that my heart the crusts of my heart started to loosen up a little bit. And lo and behold unsolicited, undesired by me was that I started to develop greater sense of compassion and compassion for that practice.

So then when I, at some point, I had to decide, I thought I had to decide what to do with my life. I had been accepted to graduate program at UC Berkeley. And I was living at the Zen monastery. And actually I was accepted in 1980 to go to UC Berkeley, and just a week or two before classes start, I wrote a letter to the department there and said, something important is come up. And I can't start this year. And so I didn't tell them important thing was I was going to a monastery. But they said, okay, you start next year. So I had this hanging over me. And for the year, the monastery, I spent a lot of time

wondering what to do with my life in which they should be back to school, what should I do? And at some point, I decided that what I wanted to do was to be ordained as a zen monk. Because by that time, I felt like what I wanted to do, what I should do, or what what I was going to do was I was going to try to respond to the suffering of the world, and going back to graduate school was also a motivation. But I wanted to try to I didn't, I felt like I'd be not satisfied if I was trying to respond to the suffering in the world, anyplace else, but at the root, the heart of suffering, where it begins. And from my understanding at that time, I had this feeling that the core suffering was a clinging to self. And the only place I knew in the world, my limited experience with the world was Buddhism, really addresses this issue of the core issue of clinging to self. So I thought, well, I'm going to engage myself full time in Buddhism, become a monk and try to support other people to practice so they can try to touch this very central area of suffering. And I didn't have no idea that I was going to be a teacher. Exactly. There were 50 priests at San Francisco Zen Center who were ahead of me in line. And there was this whole procedure which you have to go through in order to become a teacher. And one of the first things you had to do kind of before the steps was you have to be the head monk during a three month practice period. And you've got to be one head monk a year. And there are only two practice periods a year, one head monk a practice period, and only two practice periods a year. So I calculated. It would take me 25 years before you know even got even close to being on the edge of the teacher. Okay, it's fine with m. I was, you know, that wasn't the point.

And so one of the things that this is often overlooked when people think about zen, is that is one of the central aspects of Zen practice is the Bodhisattva vows. The commitment or the vow, the commitment to live one's life, for the welfare and liberation of others as well. So it's a response to others. So, even though Zen sometimes in the popular mind might be about just being fully concentrated, really present with things as they are, in fact, the religious side of Zen Buddhism has a very much held or the context for it is this experience of compassion, compassionate engagement to the world.

So I was very happy with my Zen practice. I loved being in the Zen monastery, thought that zen life the monastic life, at Tassajara was the perfect lifestyle. Maybe I'm weird, but I was very happy there. And even though it was hard, and then at some point, I came back to San Francisco, lived in City Center and then San Francisco Zen Center had its scandal, abbots scandal. Seemed like the 1980s it was kind of required for Buddhist groups in America to have the scandal with the teachers. So, San Francisco Zen Center had theirs and it's a long story. But the short story for me here is that, that freed me in certain way from the abbot of Zen center. And my response to that freedom was I went to Japan. And partly the reason I went to Japan was my father was going to be in Japan that year. And he said, well, why don't you come. And so I went to Japan and with a practice then in Japan, and was no other thoughts, but anything, any other kind of Buddhism. And then it turned out that I knew in getting my ticket to go to Japan from San Francisco that I needed to, after three months of being in Japan, I'd have to go out to Japan to get a new visa to come back in and stay longer. So I thought, well, what's the cheapest way to do that was to get actually a round trip ticket from San Francisco to Bangkok with a stop each direction at in Japan, like only \$25 or something, \$50 more. So that's what I did. So I had a ticket to Bangkok. And then I had a friend here in this country, who had a very good friend who was a monk, little monastery outside of Bangkok. And I was a Zen priest. And I had this idea that in Theravada countries they had a living tradition of Buddhist psychology, which I'd studied a little bit. I was kind of a priest and I knew of other people having experience in meditation I never had. I thought I don't have to have those, but I should know the map of meditation so I can talk to them about their experiences. So this idea of a map of Buddhist psychology. So when I got there to get my visa, I applied at the embassy, Bangkok. And then I went to this little dog patch kind of monastery, it's kind of a mess pigs running around. It was kind of kind of a smaller place. But there's this American monk was there, a friend of a friend. And I showed up and said I'm here and just I'm here until my visa comes and just tell me what to

do. So they gave me a little cootie, a little hut on the edge of the monastery over the swamps. Where they had this big kind of, I don't know what it was, like the lizard alligator or something around and this pig, the wild dogs. And right next to my little cabin was a grave, grave site. So I walked in my walking meditation on top of the grave. And it took me 10 weeks to realize that my visa was not going to come. And so my first experience of vipassana was a 10 week retreat.

That's what we should do for dharma talks, there should be sound effects. Canned laughter. That would really help the talks, I'm sure.

So that was 10 weeks was the longest that I've ever sat a retreat. In Zen tradition you have these three months retreats however, you work during the preacher studies, a variety of things and you have at the end of the retreat, you have a seven day intensive, intensive retreat. And this was a 10 week intensive retreat where basically all idea day and night was meditation, sitting and walking, sitting and walking. In that those 10 weeks, I touched something inside of me, a level of stillness, of silence that I've never known before. And I touch something deep inside of me which at the time I called a sense of self, a little seed, that little seed, I had no sense that that sense of self was a bad thing. But it was this little seed of the core core of my stillness. And it became essential for me to touch that place again. And I can't tell you exactly why. But it became kind of like a biological imperative. It became kind of like a dark night of the soul for me, that I just knew that I had to come back and get to the place again. And I went, I did go back to Japan. And the zen experience this time was a little bit disillusioning for me for variety of reasons. But one reason was that there wasn't a lot of meditation in the monastery I was in and I really had the need, this inner kind of drive to deep meditation to touch this place again.

And it's only because I knew how to do it wasn't as you possibly retreats then the desire was to go back to be possible. At the end of my year I went back to San Francisco into Zen center. And, and Zen center was very supportive of me this point they can be free roaming free room and board. While I worked at greens restaurants to earn the money to go right back to Asia. That's about four months, I went back and forth about \$2,000 to further my mind for the duration. I had nothing else nothing else had any meaning for me, nothing else was going on me but I just knew I had to go back out, go for go. Be there for however long it took without any clear idea what it meant. Because at the end of the road, come to the end of the road, this is what I was going to do. And it took me a while to finally get to Burma, wherever to go with this. Because this vipassana meditation had been taught it since then, for its origin was a particular monastery in Burma, the mahasi Center, so they wanted to go there. And then she was able to get there. And there I sat for eight months and eight months like a princess, she eight months, all I did was sit and walks if he walks into a walk and talk to anyone except the teachers, basically for eight months, once a day or so. And it was a really beautiful time to kill things. It's a strange thing to do. To sit in silence. I had mostly sat in my own room, no contact other people really. And really, really happy. Lots and lots of joy. Beautiful time. And but it wasn't that I chosen vipassana or resent then it was that it was the personnel retreat. mode. That was the only place I knew where I could touch this thing again, I stumbled on to be passionate environment, something very personally important to happen, to have to have to do it again as a follow through in place, I knew what to do it was through this be possible. And in my mind, I was going to continue sitting Zaza. That's what I was doing. My meditation practice was basically to sit and be fully present for what is without any ideas that have to be different about trying to attain anything particularly. This is full contact with reality. And but what I learned in doing it in, in vipassana world, the future there was the tremendous subtlety and precision in which that can be done. It's one thing to say I'm gonna be fully present for today. You know, Today is a big day. So yes, I can be present for today. It's another thing to say I'm gonna be present for the beginning of the next thought be released. Next is the very beginning of it. That's much more subtle than saying be present for today. So what I learned was To great subtlety and precision that my

neatness which my mind would be not accepting the mind would react, pull away things get lost, do all these different things. And so vipassana practice showed me how to be attentive and careful. So I can watch all those little movements of the mind, the smaller, more subtle women in mind, so that I could be more thorough in this attempt to be really present for things. So I was doing it and

and at some point, my teacher Panetta told me, you know, good theravadan way, he said, okay, Gil, when you sit down, make a resolution to strive, strive for Nirvana. And so I said, Okay. And then I come back the next day and say that I can't do that. What is wrong, so it's not what I'm here to do. I'm not here to take Nirvana. He looked at me kind of like What in the world? Isn't that the whole point is I'm here to be really present for things to say, Oh, that's, that's what we're trying to do here. That's good. Okay, so I thought we had an understanding. And then the next day, I came back and he said, Gil, strive for Nirvana. So I said, Okay, I just ignored him.

But I was eight months is a long time. And what happens in that kind of careful mindfulness that I was doing? It does. There's a, there's a, what I consider a natural process that can inform the natural process of deepening a path that opens up for a person. And I didn't know what this path was, but there's a particular path called the progress of insight. So I was I was introduced to this path by going through it. I didn't know what it was. And then later after I went through it, then I read a book about it is Oh, look at that. This is what happened to me. Isn't it amazing? And then it became very, very, very meaningful for me The positive practice I was introduced to it, the teachings of it. But that time it was important what happened to me as I went through it. And I would say that one of the most pivotal experiences of my life, happened on that retreat, and kind of shifted everything for me. It's like a chemical revolution, my mind and my heart. So when that kind of big shift, you know, has been making a big impression on me. And one of the interesting things that happened during my time in in Burma, those eight months, after about two months of sitting there in silence, deep practice, very concentrated. I would have these little thoughts creep into my head of San Francisco Zen Center, that people there have conversations with them. Thoughts about advancement with Zen center positions within Zen center, and you know, all these things that you're not really hard to Buddhism. And I thought, this is a weird To have this you know, Zen center is so embedded in my so deeply in my psyche. And I made a vow not to go back to Zen center until I had sense and out of my mind.

And And so after some time I went back to San Francisco. But no thoughts have been no thought of going back to Zen center. But I had a girlfriend who wanted to live at Green Gulch. So I went back to green Gulch, and lived there but worked in San Francisco for a while, and I was intent to go and do more of the faster practice. But then it didn't seem right. Like I was after eight minutes of this eight month intensive period. I was weary, somehow psychically wary. So I said, I'm not gonna I'm gonna wait a while before I go to IMS retreat center in Massachusetts. It says I was living in xencenter green Gulch without anything to do. As soon as the people there learn that they came to me and asked me well, will you take this disposition, the email, you take BBP, the head of the meditation hall? And I said, Sure. Why not? And it was great. I loved it. wonderful year at Green Gulch been having meditation hall, running the practice periods of things. And then I went back to IMS. And during before I went back to IMS, I did go see jack kornfield I soon after I came back from America from Burma, I was so busy gastic you know, it's kind of like a retreat mode kind of little altered state. Somehow a little bit too zealous. And something that was so meaningful for me, of course, you get really excited. And I heard the new jack kornfield. Maybe we never even met talk to him in the following months. But I called him up and said can I meet with you and I want to talk to you about my experiences in Burma. And he was kind enough to see me And then I said to him, will you train me to be a teacher? This stuff? And he said to me, oh, in 20 years you'll be a good teacher. And later I thought about what he said is that he just kind of politely kind of brushed the kid off. It's kind of presumptuous to go to someone you don't even know and say,

will you make me a teacher? But it wasn't presumptuous. I was just so naive. And so I just thought so. So he said, you know, basically said no. And then I went to IMS for three months, had a wonderful time, they are very meaningful time, their three month retreat, and then I came back and to be the shoe. So remember that they have to wait for 25 years to do well, because they added scandal, a lot of those priests left. And so in 1988 January, radiate It came my turn. And it was a wonderful thing to do to go from the three month retreat at IMS, directly to the Zen retreat as well. So I did that position. And then I was very happy with Zen practice. Just doing my practices is very happy with both. It wasn't like I was choosing one over the other. I felt both be positive in both in very profound both tradition, both practices, but this time that I gratefully loved. And I felt they also complement each other very well. By this time I felt that the core and the strengths of the personalized that was so inclusive, I learned how to bring presence and mindfulness to the full range of my experience. Whereas Zen I'd learn how to be present very well in a certain kind of way. But I didn't really learn the skills of how to be present wisely for emotions, like my anger, for example, and different things. In the end, be passionate. There's a lot of the instructions about Be mindful for emotions, mindfulness of thoughts, mindfulness of all the different things everything. And so I found that very helpful to have the practice expanded out that way, in a way that I hadn't had it in my century. And however, the Zen training is much more than meditation practice. And so the monastic life, the working with other people in the monastery and the friction that creates different rituals and the bowing, the whole package of monastic training is so much more than meditation practice. And I found that very helpful for me as well. It gave me a lot It taught me a lot, she'll be a lot, train me in variety of ways. So I got very important training and then that was not really available be possible. So then I after being the shoe service, heads head monk for the practice period Tassajara looked to me like I was being pushed into being more of a teacher. That was kind of direction People seem to be wanting me to go. I didn't quite feel ready. In particular, I didn't feel ready because I'd spent this time 10 years of my life in intensive meditation centers. I had. I had

spent maybe two weeks or time a year or something outside of intensive monastery. And I hadn't actually studied very much Buddhism, like practice a lot. And I thought it'd be for the future. I think I should learn more about Buddhism stuff. And so I decided to go get a master's in religious studies specializing Buddhism. They decided to do with the University of Hawaii. Where, because I wanted to study with two people when you studied with Robert Akin Roshi and Zen teacher. He does Cohen practice. And I wanted to study with a professor there named David caulerpa Hannah and Buddhist professor from Sri Lanka. And so I went there for two years. And it was like a kid in a candy store for me to be introduced to all these Buddhist texts and sutras. And a master's program was so much fun. I just had a great blast, practicing doing Zen practice. They Converse. She was great. It was also great. And I liked him a lot. He was a wonderful, wonderful teacher. And then the end of that time, in Hawaii, I got this phone call out of the blue for the concert from jack kornfield. Remember that I asked him if he trained me to look good in 20 years. But one of the things he did say which I didn't quite click was he said maybe sometime, however, some American because the teacher needs to know your practice first. So I didn't think about it anymore. But what happened was I went to IMS studied with Joseph Goldstein. And after those three months of Joseph, Joseph told jack, that he should train this guy. And so then jack called me up. And, and he called me up and asked me, he invited me to join his teacher training. It was kind of a unique experience where it's like, you have a, you have a puzzle piece. You don't even know you have these pieces during the exist, right. But as you asked me, I felt all the pieces I didn't even know I had lineup for those pieces in my lectures. And of course, it's okay. Yes, I said. So then I started that training and then I came back to San Francisco for me to be near Zen center again, because that was my practice community. So it wasn't choosing one over the other. It didn't have the feeling had to choose one over the other. It's not like you know, being you know, Catholic or you know, choosing either be a Catholic or Protestant or Catholic and Muslim There's one more sense of exclusion there those traditions, but Buddhism is Buddhism. So it's time is out. Should I continue a little

bit longer? If you if you welcome somebody similar you need to leave you're welcome to go. I apologize for being late. So, I, I came back and I ended up living at Sam's Christian Center again, oh, this time I thought the master's program was boosted was so great. And I didn't feel I felt like I just kind of scratched the surface. And so I was encouraged to apply for PhD program, Buddhist studies. And so I applied for two universities here in Bay Area to do that. And I didn't expect it I didn't expect to get accepted. And I thought was fine with me, because I had things to do. I was gonna practice studying. But I got accepted. So I went to Stanford. And to my surprise, maybe some of you know this, but I didn't know it at the time that a doctoral program is very different than a master's program.

So I didn't know that. And so it was a whole different kind of experience. But Stanford was very good because it was it was very easy there to I would basically go to go to Stanford, two quarters a year. And then another. The other two quarters I do other things are going to retreat and go teach, retreat, do different things. And so I didn't have to kind of always be there and studying so it allowed me to kind of do other things as well. And then because I came back to live at San Francisco Zen Center, the first year at Stanford, one of the habits there, who I knew was one of my teachers suggested that I start studying with him in preparation Receiving what's called Dharma transmission, which is to be transmitted to be a full fledged teacher. And so I started that training with him and met with him weekly basis for a few years. Preparation for that process, that at some point in mid 90s, I finished the process, he went through his transmission ceremony and became so we can, you know, at least on paper is in teacher. And so these two these, there's some point is there in the personnel practices for parallel practices. And, and I never felt that they were kind of in opposition to each other. If anything, they were complimentary to each other. They were supportive of each other, both of them I love them a lot. But one of the advantages, there's advantages or disadvantages to being in more than one tradition, this way disadvantage, especially for someone who's a beginner, is you never go very deep, you kind of skim the surface or two. But where the advantages is that they both have their strengths, you get the strengths from both traditions. Also, when you're going to traditions like that, sometimes you can see the other tradition better and better position to understand what's going on. And so I understand much better I think, because of because the weakness, the weaknesses of both traditions as well, the way they're kind of weak. And so they're both strengths and weaknesses in both traditions. And so what happened then, is that the world of vipassana teacher, kept inviting me asked me to teach in that world and I was asked to teach teach a sitting group that we had 1990 in Palo Alto, and that's grew into what we have now. And then I started thinking as to teach retreats we possibly retreats. That's where the invitation where the need for me to sense was where I was asked to come. And that kind of started filling my time. The Zen world, San Francisco Zen Center, they have a lot of priests and teachers there. And they don't need one more. So they didn't ask me to teach, even though I was a teacher, So it's kind of like by my life kind of wait, where the invitations where the need were, where the vacuum was, in a sense. And so now my life is so filled with the personnel in the course of that, in the last 20 years, it's also brought me into contact with the early teachings of the Buddha. And, and so with the deepening study of Buddhism, I've had increasing questions about Zen Buddhism, some questions about the teachings of it, even though it's very meaningful for me still, and very inspired by the teachings of the Buddha and more study at the more inspiring Embedded, but not completely. There's some questions there as well. But I find it that there's something about the practicality of it the macdon metaphysical quality of it, the almost rational aspects of it, where it's almost a form a very deep radical therapy, more than some kind of religious belief or faith is very meaningful for me. Zen Buddhism, as I understand it, and some of my Zen teacher, friends will, will, will powerfully debate this with me. And, but my feeling is that my understanding is that Zen is a faith based religion. With a fundamental faith that's very important for it that you have to kind of understand there is make it work. Now that my my teacher friends disagree with me, but that's the kind of debate and that the Theravada Buddhism Vipassana Buddhism whereas Confidence. The faith, it's called like confidence is very important. Faith is not as it's

not the same. It's almost like exam there's almost like a metaphysical belief or faith is to have it. Yeah. And then one way it's worded in sin, is that in circles in particular schools of Zen,

is that you're already a Buddha. You already have Buddha nature, it's a matter of expressing that or being that nothing needs to be attained nothing, you know, to go anywhere. It's all perfect. Just the way it is just have to kind of wait awaken to that be present for that. And from my point of view, that's a faith statement. In tera, vaada Buddhism, they don't make statements like that. What they say is, if you happen to suffer, if that's something you've noticed in yourself, then here's a path to help free from the suffering. So in that sense, it's kind of like therapy. But the call of therapy is almost, you know, is kind of is to be a little bit than it is to belittle how, amazingly deep spiritual training formation entails. But that's why I say that then has more to do with faith and in post those more to do with something else, however, that faith is a faith that I have. So I feel very strongly connected to it as well. In my own way I'd worded maybe a little differently, but how it's worded sometimes isn't. So for me, I feel strongly connected to both questions about both. I haven't been involved in Zen as much so much in the last 15 years or so 12 years. So, you know, haven't had a chance to explore it, deepen it and question it. And the same way that I had for the past on Theravada Buddhism. And maybe someday I'll have that chance. But in the meantime, I'm very, very happy and content in this tradition, and I'm very content offering this tradition to everyone because I think it will take people as far as you need to go if you want to go someplace or not go someplace, take you there too. And, and it does have a deepening process for the whole community, me and the whole community to be involved in this one tradition here and exploring it. And, and I think it's really a marvelous thing both to deepen in one particular tradition. But it's also, I think, marvelous thing to deepen enough. So you can begin asking really good questions about the tradition, and about yourself in the process, to, to not just accept it all as it is, but actually begin questioning, engaging and kind of debating with the tradition itself. Rather than taking it this is the truth. And so this is a tradition that I'm mostly involved in that process with. And so when I teach and be possible, it might not be obvious when I give Dharma talks. But the back behind behind what I'm trying to do the Dharma talks is also that whole questioning process that The tradition as well as to offer it and offer a practice in a way hopefully useful for a wide range of people. So, you know, it's certainly an adequate presentation, there's a lot more to be said about these two traditions. And it's inevitable that that offended someone in these traditions facing this way people disagree. But that's my best shot here today. And maybe some other time if you want to ask questions about that. We couldn't have more discussion. Thank you.