So continuing today with the fourth talk on the topic of Nibbāna. And in some circles Nibbāna, there's a lot of intense conversation about what Nibbāna is. With the idea that it's a noun, it's a thing, and or a particular state, and it has to be something. And people, there's a lot of discussions about what it is. And maybe this experience of deep release, deep freedom doesn't lend itself to very, to some very clear idea of what it is. Because mostly what it is, is the absence of something. And what's left in the absence, maybe it's not need, we don't need to know. And this idea of to know, to understand, sometimes is a real hindrance and actually gets in the way of living the freedom that we have experienced.

And so but instead of looking at what Nibbāna is, more than it's a movement of freedom, it's a release of deep, letting go or non clinging. Beyond that, rather than trying to define what it is in some metaphysical way, or clear way, as a thing. What's important about Nibbāna is how it functions for us. So if a person is really thirsty, the molecular structure of water is not important. What's important is the function of drinking water, to quench the thirst. So in the same way that molecular structure of Nibbāna, what it might actually be, is it a form of consciousness, is it form of some transcendent state to some ultimate reality, some thing that's unconditioned? All these questions that people want to have answered, there may be besides the point. The real point of Nibbāna is how we're changed by it, how it functions for us. And that's, in fact, one of the ways in which this discussion about liberation, freedom, awakening is discussed in the Buddhist tradition is by how the person who's liberated is changed.

And the advantage of looking at how we've changed, how we have been transformed, is that it's a little protection against clinging to an experience, now I have that experience. Now, I'm that kind of person. I'm making a self out of that experience. It's also protection against getting too preoccupied
about feeling, having opinions about what Nibbāna really is. What's important maybe it's not what it is, but how it works on us, how we're changed. And perhaps different people have different experiences of Nibbāna, different ways in which they go through it, or ways in which they touch into something like freedom. And so we don't want to kind of concretize too much what it is as an experience, as is we want to understand how it's going to function for us.

So one of the functions is to release a person of attachments. For attachments really here means clinging, the ways in which the mind has gotten contracted or tight or compulsive around or driven by certain desires, certain aversions, certain ideas, certain feelings, certain motivations. And this drivenness, this compulsion, this contracting around, this grabbing hold, this insistence that this is how it's going to be or this being pushed by something even if we don't want it, we can't help ourselves because this is very strong drive that we feel driven. Is part of the function is to have this freedom from that drivenness, from that compulsion. The ancient language uses the word thirst for what we in English would translate as craving. But they use this metaphor of thirst for this driven desires that we're becoming free of.

So part of the function of Nibbāna is to free us or begin the process of freeing us from the desires of thirst, the thirsty desire, kind of where there's a kind of compulsive compulsion in it. It also the function is to begin understanding where the path of freedom resides, where the open doors are. And so it's becomes clear that it's not found in rituals, and it's also not found in precepts, certain rules of behavior, certain, you know, rituals and things. Rituals and precepts can be useful and phenomenally wonderful for human life and they have their important place. But they in of themselves, are not the direct experience, a direct movement, towards the opening the doors of the mind and the heart, of becoming free.

And so part of what the Buddha's pointing to with liberation is the possibility of having a vision of where freedom is found, a vision of where the doors are open for awareness to just be open and clear and free with our experience. And that idea of a vision is encapsulated in the first step of the Eightfold Path, right view, right vision. And to have had an experience that's clear enough of freedom, to now have a kind of inner sight. The Buddha called it the dharma eye has been opened. And dharma vision has been open, where we kind of now have a sense of feeling for or a vision for, or a clear recognition of what is freedom of the mind. Where the mind is, the doors are open, at ease, peaceful, happy.

And so having that we see the direct path to freedom. That precepts, rules, rituals, are not as direct as this direct path the Buddhist pointing to. So that's, you know, because rituals can be such a big part of some people's lives, if they think that the ritual themselves are going to be freeing. That's what the Buddha, I think, was really pointing to, in and of themselves, they're not freeing. The same thing with philosophies. The Buddha was quite adamant that believing in philosophies, believing in certain metaphysical ideas, and believing certain ideas are ultimate is just a trap. That's not where freedom is
found. Freedom is not found, even if it's good ideas, even if it's true ideas. That's not where freedom is found. Freedom is found in non clinging, in release.

And another thing that becomes clear with when the freedom is clear enough, Nibbāna is clear enough, that that sense of release and openness and freedom and their radiance, the light, the clarity, the happiness, the ease, the well being that comes with it, is independent of any idea of an essential self, a permanent self, a reified self. The ancient language is a true body, a true group of things. Sakkāya, sa means true here, and kaya. And in the ancient world there were people who believe there was a true body essence. And we had to realize what that essence was and then we can be free. Find out who our true authentic self is. The Buddha said that this idea of Nibbāna, this freedom becomes a freedom also from any preoccupation, concern, desire for this kind of finding this kind of true, essential, authentic essence that's always there. And in fact, the freedom shows that that's not needed in a sense, not need, it's not there in the freedom, in the open door. And some people then will word this, explain this saying Nibbāna is also a clear recognition of not self. And so this absence of self and that experience is very freeing and very nice to have.

And then the other function of this experience of Nibbāna, the release or the freedom of Nibbāna, the freedom release from greed, hate and delusion, is to have a clear understanding, as I said yesterday, really clear, crystal clear understanding of the difference between being caught in greed, hate and delusion, caught in clinging, and the absence of being caught. And when the absence of being caught, when the freedom is so clear, then a person has a first hand experience of what the Dharma is, what the Buddha was teaching. It's not abstract philosophy, it's not something that complicated. It's the really clear recognition of this potential we have of no longer being preoccupied by clinging, aversion, attachments, and aversions, hostilities, all these things, and to have this qualitative clear experience of that ease and peace and freedom. And to know that's possible. And this is what the Buddha was about. This is what this teaching gives a person. An unshakable confidence in the three refuges, in the Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha, not because they now kind of dogmatically believe the Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha, but now they know for themselves, something that can never be taken away. And so because it's one's own, it's personal, in a sense, that this tremendous confidence arises. This is possible. And then the confidence is a confidence really, in the in the value of being free, the value of not clinging or being attached. The value of really keeping the doors open in the mind and the heart, and learning how to do that in a wise effective and safe way. And not succumbing to the beliefs that we have to close the doors, not succumbing to the beliefs that we have to cling or have to have aversion or have to tighten up or get this compulsive driven kind of qualities back going.

So the functions of Nibbāna is that the essence at tremendous confidence in the potential for freedom because this first experience of Nibbāna is not necessarily going to be complete. Letting go of all the clinging attachments we have. It's a letting go that may be complete momentarily or for a short time. But then our clingings will come back, some of them will come back. And at that point, but now we know. We know the practice is not to believe those or give those authority or invest ourselves in the
world of clinging. The path is towards freedom. This path is to find those open doors in the maze of the mind so that life can flow through us, rather than life experiences getting stopped and gummed up in our hearts and minds.

So the function of Nibbāna. And then tomorrow, I'll talk about the relationship with Nibbāna and the Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path arises out of the experience, the sense of Nibbāna.

So thank you so much, and I look forward to seeing you tomorrow. Or seeing you, I don't really see you but being with you and seeing your wonderful names and places you're from and your greetings. Thank you.