

# 2020-10-28 Eightfold Path-Right View (1 of 3)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

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So this morning I'll start on the factors of the eight factored path, the Eightfold Path. And the first factor, some people will consider it the most important. And this is called right view. And with the right view, if it's really centered in right view, some times it's said and the Buddha says sometimes is that all the other factors of the Eightfold Path will naturally unfold with right view. There is right intention or right consideration as I'll talk about. A different translation. And then right speech. With right consideration, there's right speech; with right speech, right action; with right action, right livelihood, right way of living, right lifestyle. And then comes right effort and right mindfulness. And with right mindfulness comes right concentration.

So these things kind of build on each other. And some of the languages, it's natural that one follows the other. And so the emphasis in this little talk is that with the right view, there's something about right view that naturally leads to the rest of the eightfold path. And how is that? What is this right view? The word is in Pali, is very similar to the English word view, their word is ditthi. And it means more literally kind of to see, or derived from the verb to see or to look. And it's the way of looking. And so it's similar to the English word view, where you can go to a vista and see the great view of the town below you from high up, you have a nice overview, view. But a view is also used in English to mean a belief for an opinion or an orientation a person has towards something, a belief. And you might say that's your view, but I have a different view. And so, the Pali in English had this similar kind of double meaning around this word. And that double meaning comes into play when we look at what the meanings are for right view. And there are two meanings or two categories of meanings of this right view. And that relate to the two ways I've talked about the Eightfold Path. On one hand, the Eightfold Path can be a beginner's practice, when someone comes to Buddhism, learns about the Eightfold Path, and one begins to follow it. And on the other hand, it could be someone who has some experience, some real maturity in the practice, some deep kind of realization of freedom. Where right view is a consequence of that realization. So for the person who begins, sometimes may be called the more conventional eightfold path and conventional right view, is closer to the English idea of a belief and understanding that we have. A perspective that we adopt. A frame of reference for understanding our experience. And

I like the language a frame of reference or a perspective. Because a belief implies you have to believe something. A perspective or frame of reference means it's a way of looking that doesn't necessarily involve a belief. But it's a perspective we bring. There can be many perspectives. And for now, we're going to use this perspective. But it's okay to see it as a belief. So I call this the conventional right view. And then there's the liberating right view. And for today I'll mention this conventional right view, that's more like a belief.

And there are two kind of beliefs or perspectives or frames of references for understanding our experience that is this conventional right view. The first is very ordinary idea, an idea, perspective, a belief, that is so deeply ingrained in many of our lives, so deeply part of it, that we don't even think about it. We operate as if we have this perspective already. We do have this perspective, this point of view. So it's not really a foreign idea. It's just that it's emphasized and made conscious in a way that maybe isn't always so conscious or maybe not applied as deeply as it could. And that is the view that our actions, the actions we do, are consequential. That what we do has consequences. And that's almost, you know, some people say, what's the big deal of that? The big deal is that we want to take care of our actions. We are the custodians of our actions. That what we do, we want to be start becoming responsible for and start to kind of having some choice about. And understand a little bit what is a wise action and what is not wise to do.

So consequences of actions. And so if we slander our best friend, not only might they hear about it and end the friendship, but also it's kind of feels kind of yucky inside ourselves if we do it. If we did it at a moment when we were kind of distracted or caught up or reactive. And then afterwards we realize what we done, it just feels lousy. If we find ourselves spontaneously behind our friends back praising their good qualities, then we might have a nicer feeling inside. The consequences may be a nice feeling, a sense of happiness, or feeling it's nice to remember those good qualities and be reminded of it. And that feels good. It's nice to have shared it with someone else and celebrated it. And if they hear about it, maybe they feel happy. And then there's happiness continues in all kinds of ways. They come back and say nice things to you. So what we say can have huge consequences. And so we want to be careful to recognize what we say is consequential. Not to be intimidated or closed down, but to be considerate about what we say.

Same thing with our actions. What we do. The things we do in the world. They're consequential. And sometimes maybe minorly so. But even minorly so, it can be consequential in the long term or in the big picture. When I came back from three years or so, almost three years, living in a Zen monastery, one of the consequences of being there, living a very intentional life, very mindful and present for so much ordinary things we did every day. Sitting down, standing, walking through doors, walking down steps, chopping vegetables, cleaning the toilets, everything was done with a certain kind of real focus and intentionality. When I came back and back to somewhat ordinary life, and started living kind of how normal people live, I guess. And I recognized in a way I had never done before, that I had a lot more choice about how I act. And what I say. It became kind of subtle, where I became aware that I

had a choice in how I sat in a chair. And before going to the monastery, I just sat in the chair and didn't think about it. After the monastery, I was conscious and mindful about how I sat. And I would choose to sit in a way that had a good consequence. That had made me more alert and present. And didn't kind of turn off my attention. But I wanted to be present here. So this idea that actions have consequences, then bears out in the practice. Because if we are interested in the primary Buddhist purpose, kind of the fundamental way of describing it. You can't get more basic. You can get more lofty and have other ways of talking about the purpose of Buddhism. But from the Buddha's point of view at the most fundamental core purpose is to bring an end to suffering. And so this principle that our actions have consequences play out in relationship to suffering and freedoms from suffering. That our actions can move in one direction or the other. They can move towards greater suffering, or greater freedom from suffering.

And this then comes into the second conventional right view. And that's the right view that some actions are wholesome and some are unwholesome. Some are skillful, or unskillful, depending how the word kusala is translated. And kusala can be translated as skillful or wholesome. To make it really practical and maybe more understandable for English speakers, sometimes I like to render those two words as helpful and not helpful. Harmful or not harmful. So kusala is helpful. It's not harmful. Akusala is what is harmful and not helpful. And this ability to see that distinction and know that it makes a difference. Which we choose is at the heart of this eightfold path.

So that is a kind of belief, but it's not really a doctrinal belief. It's more like a principle. So that's why a principle or frame of reference or an orientation that we adopt. We adopt the orientation that every action we do is consequential. And so then in a relaxed way, not being burdened by that. As if you're going to run a marathon, you start slow and easy, you don't kind of go all out. But the idea is to orient ourselves now that our actions are consequential. We're responsible for the consequences if we are choosing what we do. And in a certain way, there's a lot more choice in what we say, and do, and act, then most of us really recognize. And not to be burdened by that choice, but actually find it liberating to have choice. Because it takes a while to get a hang of this. But we learn to choose that's which is relaxing, that which brings ease, that which brings happiness and well being. And rather than the act of being conscious of choice becoming a duty or a burden, being conscious of choices clearly felt like oh, we keep going through the open doors. We keep going to the place where there's ease and freedom and goodness. And coincidentally, the place where the doors are open, where there's ease and relaxation, openness, happiness, tends to be in the direction of goodness. Tends to be the direction of being ethical. Tends to be the direction that leads us to freedom.

So the conventional right view. Some people will say that it has to do with understanding karma. And I say that the fundamental core idea of karma is that our actions have consequences. And just have that principle as you go through the day, to have that orientation. And you might see for the next 24 hours, before we come back tomorrow, and I teach you about that liberating right view, you might kind of tune into your choices in what you say and what you do. And you might tune into little bit to noticing the

consequences of your actions. And you might review it afterwards,. How would that feel? How did that make me feel? Was that good for me? Was that good for me? Was helpful or not helpful? Do I feel more alert or feel more kind of down for what I just did? Both in in action, in speech. And if you really get subtle and have the mindfulness strong, the mind, the thoughts, and motivations, and in the mind, are also a kind of action. So what we think has consequences too. And then the practice gets really fascinating and really useful. When we're able to see that our thinking and see that those are also consequential for how we feel and how we are. And we can choose in a healthy appropriate way to not think that which undermines us. And we can think that which supports us.

So right intention, conventional right intention. And I look forward to talk about liberating, liberative right. Not intention. Right view. Liberative right view tomorrow. Thank you.