

2020-10-30 Eightfold Path Right View (3 of 3)

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SPEAKERS

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So continuing the theme of the Eightfold Path. This is the third and final discussion about the first factor of the Eightfold, eight factor, path, that of right view. And I've made a distinction between conventional, what I call conventional right view, and liberative right view. The view that is liberating. And we might also think of the first one as provisional right view. And the second as verified right view. So when someone is brand new to spiritual life maybe, or even a self reflective life, and new to Buddhism, it might be that they'll take on Buddhist teachings provisionally. Let me check it out. This is what they're saying. And somebody might even tell you provisionally, believe in this. Take this point of view. And that provisional right view, conventional right view, and then initially is of kind of belief, provisional belief. And the heart of that belief is an idea that our actions are consequential. That what we do is actually quite important and it bears fruit. It has an effect on the world and on ourselves. And that it's useful to pay attention to that and take that into account. And in particular, it's useful to understand action and their consequences from the perspective of what is wholesome and unwholesome. What is suffering and what is not suffering. What is healthy and not healthy. And what is harmful and not harmful. There is a kind of distinction that's made. And to believe initially, one might have to just believe provisionally that certain things are wholesome or helpful or something. So for example, for some people, they're told that you should believe that not killing is wholesome. And not stealing is wholesome. Not engaging in sexual misconduct is wholesome. And not lying is wholesome. And if someone doesn't already know that, then please accept that provisionally, disbelief. Act as if it's true. The idea is that as we act that way, that it becomes verified for us at some point. We see for ourselves, oh, you know, this is actually right. I'm so much better off not killing and stealing and lying and these things. And my life is happier, more open and less stressed. And so we see Oh, yes, there's a difference. There is wholesome and unwholesome. And it gets more and more subtle, or more and more precise over time, to things more subtle or something than these gross violations of the precepts. But the idea is we're moving to a verified understanding.

So deliberative right view could be taken as a belief. And that is deliberative one is a deep view, deep understanding of how thoroughly things are inconstant, changing and, and impermanent. And it's very

easy to hear Buddhist teachings and take this as a belief. Now I have to believe everything's impermanent. And then we want to argue with it. And at the most, as a belief, it's a provisional belief that maybe is useful to think about. That yes, things change. And let me take it into account that things change, there'll be different than what I expect, they'll be different than they are now. And sometimes they'll be better. Sometimes, unfortunate things will happen. And this is built into the structure of human life and reality almost that this constant change. And it might be a belief. And maybe it's a useful belief for some people who believe the opposite, that everything's fixed. But the real idea is that this is supposed to be verified. And only when it's verified in a certain way, we see it really clearly for ourselves, we know it for ourselves as a direct experience, can right view be liberating. And that's the whole thrust of right view, is that it's the view that brings liberation. Brings freedom in the mind.

And the important part of right view is not that you have the view, the perspective, that everything is changing. The real importance is how it's a catalyst for freedom. And the freedom that we experience. That is what opens up to the next steps of the Eightfold Path. And we'll go start on Monday with it. The second factor of the Eightfold Path, usually called right intention but I'm going to call it the right consideration, has a lot to do with how we live our lives. And steps three, four, and five have a lot to do with how we relate to other people. And there's a direct correlation between how we experience liberation for ourselves, and then how we want to live our lives. What flows out of us in relationship to lives with others. So we'll see that next week.

But for now, this idea that there's deep seeing for oneself of impermanence, inconstancy, change, that can be a catalyst for the mind to become free. So in the meditation we just did, I encouraged you to count your breathing. Sometimes counting the breath, staying on track with counting the breath, can be a little difficult. It's easy enough to count to 10. But to really do it in meditation, one to 10 repeatedly. If the mind is not concentrated, we'll see that the mind wanders off very easily. And sometimes you can hardly get half a count in before the mind gets pulled off into its thoughts. And it's possible sometimes to feel that pull, the glue, the gravitational pull of thinking, of being concerned about things, and having concerns, and what's important. And as we're seeing this, it's very important things to see. Because we start seeing the power of the mind. The power to be caught up in its thoughts and its ideas and all this. And we come back to the counting. And then we get pulled again. You can feel the pull and not only feeling the pull, but we can see how we latch on to ideas, latch on to thoughts and fantasies and stories and memories and plans and all that. There's a kind of latching on. And that latching on, that getting hooked on, that grabbing on, in Buddhist language is called clinging or attachment. And it can be mild and can be quite strong.

But one of the features of this kind of clinging or latching on to ideas is we also latch on to our projections, our interpretations, the ideas we we project onto reality. And there are three primary projections that this practice, this liberating practice of inconstancy, impermanence, is meant to free us from. One is the projections we have that things are permanent. That they will always be this way. That I'm always this way. That person I'm talking to will never change, is always exactly that way, the

way that my idea of the person. And so we project all kinds of ideas on other people. And now that we have such a better, not good enough yet, but better understanding of racism and bias and prejudice that exists in our society, that we see that tremendous harm that happens with this projection of someone is just this way. Permanent, this is who they are. Without seeing the all the different facets and the changing nature of people. Or this day is this way. The story I've told where many years ago when my son was quite young, he was what's called a highly spirited child. And so for highly spirited meant a lot of work and a lot of attention. And one day, I remember being in there and my wife and I were hovering over him trying to manage with something and it just seems so difficult. And my wife just looked up at me and said, "we're having one of those kinds of days." And as soon as she said that I realized I had been projecting kind of a, I didn't believe this if I thought about it, but unconscious projection onto the situation that this is going to be forever. Of course, if you asked me I knew it wasn't going to be forever. But that was the kind of attitude I had that made it so much more difficult. And as soon as she said, "it's just that kind of day", that kind of freed something in me. And I said, "Oh. That's how it is now, it won't be this way later." So this idea of projecting permanence. And if we really see how much change, then we begin loosening up on that projection. This idea, this latching on to that idea.

We also have the idea that certain things are happier than they are. We project our expectations for happiness, we project our desire for happiness, pleasure. And certainly things are pleasant, and we want happiness in Buddhism. But the projecting and expectation and wanting and chasing, usually involves a projection, ideas, expectations, dreams on top of things. And it can be innocent enough to do that. But when you see in meditation, you're trying to stay on track on the breath. And your mind gets pulled into these ideas, strongly fully. Your mind is not free then. The mind is caught.

So the third projection is a projections of called self. And the projection of ideas we have about who I am or who other people are. But especially ourselves. And we get stuck in these ideas, judgments, histories, identifications. And of course, some identities are appropriate. But here again, the litmus test of staying on the breath, being able to stay in focus and hang in there with the breath, shows us how much we can latch on and get caught by the identities, the ideas, the definitions, our judgments, we have about ourself. And as we can stay with the change and see change, we see that actually things that are always changing and unfolding, don't really fit very nicely into our projections of permanence, our projections of happiness, our projections of even suffering, and our projections of self.

And to really see a change, impermanence in a direct, deep, deep way like in meditation, where we're really flowing. The opportunities to really settle in and get concentrated and very still. And not just get calm in a nice way, in a meaningful way. But to really start feeling everything is kind of vibrating and flowing and streaming and changing all the time. It loosens up the grip of these projections.

Also, as we see the projection, see how we latch on to ideas, it becomes easier to want to let go of some of them or not hold on. We realize that it's not actually wholesome or helpful or healthy to be so

latched on, hooked on to ideas. It's much more healthy to be able to think in a relaxed, open, creative, responsible way, without getting stuck in our thoughts and latching on and glued on to them and stressed around them.

So for the Buddha, the primary insight that's liberating is the insight into inconstancy and change. And we see that in the breathing. The breathing is inconstant, changing stream of repeated phenomena, sensations, but it's streaming flowing. And it can be a wonderful way to begin dipping into the stream of change, impermanence, in a way that begins to show us how we get caught in the opposite, these projections and latching on. And beginning to loosen that grip. Loosen the grip of them on the mind, on these projections, these ideas. And as they loosen, we progressively get more and more free, more and more open, relaxed. And that makes all the difference in the world. That as the heart, the mind becomes freer and freer, it sets in motion a whole other way of living. A whole other way of being in the world. A whole other way of being in ourselves, that is born out of liberation. Out of whatever degree of freedom we have. And that is the next steps of the Eightfold Path. The next four have a lot to do with our relationship to other people and how we live with other people. And to see how freedom also has social connotations about how we live in the world is the topic of the next four factors of the Eightfold Path. And we'll start that on Monday. And with the right intention or right consideration. And I think it's a wonderful coincidence that these wonderful things, the right intention, which have a lot to do with compassion and kindness, are going to be talked about right as we enter into this election days that are ahead. And so I hope that the topics will be supportive in potentially challenging days ahead.

So thank you. I wish you well and please be safe. And please remember that you don't have to get locked on, latched on, to whatever the mind is thinking. Thank you.