

Dharma Talk at Buddha Center, Second Life

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“Letting Go”

Start with a joke? OK, you know the famous French 17th century philosopher Rene Descartes. He was sitting at a bar one day and enjoying a few rounds of beer. And the bartender noticed that he had finished his last glass and went over to him and said, “Excuse me Monsieur Descartes, will you have another?” And Descartes replied, “I think not.” And POOF he disappeared.

Here’s another one: Jesus was preaching to the masses, to the crowds one day and he said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like $3x^2 + 5x + 2$. And nobody understood what he was talking about, not even the Apostles understood him. So they went off to the side and were talking to each other. “The Kingdom of Heaven is like $3x^2 + 5x + 2$? What is he...? Do you get it Tom?” “No.” “Do you get it James?” “No.” “Let’s go to Peter; he’s second in command so he probably knows.” So they go to Peter and they say, “Hey, Pete. The Boss just gave a teaching and he said, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like $3x^2 + 5x + 2$.’ What did he mean by that? We don’t get it.” And Peter says, “Ahh, don’t mind him. It’s just another one of his parables.”

Those are not mine, by the way. I heard both of them told by Garrison Keillor on NPR.

So would you like some more Zen “sit-down” comedy? All right, I will tell just one more.

You heard about the Zen hot dog vendor, right? A man comes up to the Zen hot dog vendor and says, “Make me one with everything.” So the Zen hot-dog vendor does, and gives it to the man, who is very happy. The man gives the Zen hot-dog vendor a 20 dollar bill to pay him. The Zen hot-dog vendor puts the 20 dollar bill in the cash box and closes the box. The man is waiting there and eventually says, “Hey, where’s my change?” And the Zen hot-dog vendor smiles and replies, “Change must come from within.”

So what would we like to discuss today?

Comment: Summer Solstice. What to do on the longest day of the year?

What do you do on the longest day of the year? The same thing you do on any day of the year, Be Present, and be part of it, and become one with Time and Space. What is the longest day of the year?

C: Drink Cuban coffee

That's good too :)

The longest day, or the shortest day, or whatever day is just a concept.

C: There is no longest day.

Yes, there is no longest day; that is correct. There is only now. There is only Eternity. There is only the Eternal Present Moment. It's the only time that you can be. So what do you do on the longest day? The same thing that you do on any day.

C: Time doesn't really exist.

Yes, that is very wisely said. Time is a function of the ego. Time exists only in our thoughts. Time is a concept, it's not a reality.

C: The longest day is shorter in Miami than in Chicago

Yes, that's true. And shorter still than in Ecuador.

C: As we can see in meditation, there is no time if you meditate. You think you meditate 20 minutes and it's 45.

That's true. In meditation you go into a state of timelessness.

C: Time is relative

C: We have all the time in the world.

Yes we have all the time in the world because the present moment is eternal. So, we have all the time and we have no time.

C: Time is a construct like the self.

Yes, well, like the ego self. If you use the self with a capital S Self, then that term has been used to describe the Eternal Ground of Being, Godness, Divinity, Source Energy, whatever. So time is a construct of the little s self.

C: The body is a shell

Yes the body is like a shell. It is like Divine Energy wearing clothing for a while and at the end of the day we take it off.

C: We are enmeshed in time and the fabric of life.

And that's true too. But remember what Jesus said, "to be in the world but not of the world." We can be in the world, and within this construct of time and space, and yet still be identified with our Source Energy which is timeless and spaceless.

Q: I have a very multi-cultural family which is fun and wonderful but they often argue who we are. Are we black or white or Christian or Jew? And this frustrates me because I think I am all that.

Well Gandhi once gave a reply to a question such as that. He said, "I am a Hindu and I am a Jew and I am a Christian and I am a Muslim and I am a Buddhist. I am all of that."

C: You're a spirit having a human experience.

That's basically true. Are you those labels? Remember when we did our A-B-C exercise at the beginning? And I said, "Look at the objects around you and see them in their isness and their suchness without label or concept or judgment." Well, being black or white or Christian or Jew or whatever all of that is just judgment, concepts, conditions. You are who you are beyond all name and thought and opinion, beyond all label. And you get in touch with that every time you enter into the A-B-C of Mindfulness state. Every time you shift away from your identification with your thoughts and your concepts and your beliefs and your opinions and you shift your attention to the core of your being, to who and what you truly are. To your breath, to your inner body, your inner energy and to all of the phenomena around you. Seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting without judgment or label and allowing those boundaries that the mind, that the ego creates to dissolve.

So what do you say, respond, when they ask that question, "Are you black or white, Christian or Jew?" or whatever?

C: I say, "I am me."

And yes, that's absolutely true. When I was teaching at a college up in New York, when I was living in New York I used to give the students all kinds of Zen stories and Zen parables. Even though I was teaching Psychology at the time, which is a very Western scientific thought process. I used to ask my students, "Who are you? Who are you really?"

And so I ask you the same question, “Who are you? Are you a man or a woman, or the role that you play? Are you your job or profession? Are you a mother or a father, daughter, husband, wife?”

C: I am that I am

C: Such. We all inter-are.

Yes, you’ve been reading a lot of Thich Nhat Hahn I see :)

C: Je suis moi. I am me.

C: Much muchier.

Ok, and that’s true. But even those things that you are saying are just words. You can’t tell other people who you are, you can only show them by being who you are, by feeling who you truly are beyond words and thoughts and judgments... to the very core of your being.

C: I am action?

You are that action, you are the actor.

C: I am the cloud in the sky and the water in the sea.

That’s true too, but remember what you just said is only words.

Just be. Remember Lao Tzu said in the Tao de Ching, Number 47:

There is no need to go outside for better seeing

Nor to peer from a window.

Rather, abide from the center of your being

For the more that you leave it

The less you learn

Search your heart and see

If he is wise who takes each turn

The way to do is to be

C: Surely I should do more than just be.

Yes, you can do whatever you want. Where is that doing coming from? Is it coming from a self-centered separate ego? Is it coming from the core of your being that is connected with all that is? Are you choosing wisely or are you choosing foolishly?

C: We have to be in the world to pay a bill, help a family member.

Yes, that is absolutely true. You do have to do all those things. But the question is how are you doing them? *How* are you doing them?

C: Interesting. In meditation we are taught to be aware of our breathing, but in reality we inter-are. We need to feel all our breathing.

Well the first great Bodhisattva vow. Does anyone here know the four great Bodhisattva vows?

The first is: Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them.

How can you as a separate, ego-bound human being save all sentient beings? Impossible. You can intend to, but here is the key. When you dis-identify with your particle nature, when you dis-identify with your ego-bound, separate, limited, attached consciousness and you become who and what you truly are, by being truly mindful, by enlightening yourself, by awakening your mind, by focusing on your breathing, focusing on your inner body, focusing on all the phenomena around you without label or judgment, and allowing the boundary between inside and outside to dissolve – which is in essence “saving” yourself or transcending your limited, ego-bound, contracted state – then you truly do save all sentient beings, because you are all sentient beings, you are one with the entire field of conscious energy that is the Universe, that is all that is that we are all part of, that we are all seemingly separate components of. But that separation is an illusion. So you can only fulfill that Bodhisattva vow if you give up the idea that there is a “you” separate from all other sentient beings and that somehow you can save all the rest of “them”.

C: By helping others, we help ourselves. And by helping ourselves, we help others.

Absolutely correct. And that is the only way we are going to “save the world” from all the problems we are experiencing in our current day and age.

C: It is difficult to think that I am part of, say, a person who murders.

Yes, it is difficult, I absolutely agree with you. But it’s not impossible. There’s a story that’s told by Thich Nhat Hahn. Thich Nhat Hahn heard the story about a band of pirates in the South China Sea somewhere off the coast of South Vietnam. They attacked a refugee ship or a raft or something like that and they captured the people on board. There was a 12 year old girl and one of the pirates raped her. The 12 year old girl was so ashamed that she jumped into the

ocean and drowned; she killed herself. Thich Nhat Hahn said, "I have compassion for that girl of course, but I also have compassion for the pirate who did that act because of whatever influences he was exposed to that caused him to feel such hostility and such inhumanity that he could do something like that to another human being."

It's only when we embrace both good and evil, only when we accept it. Not condone it, not allow it, but embrace that it is there. It is there because of the ignorance of the person who is committing it. Because that person was exposed to evil when he or she was younger. And so that is all he or she knows; that it is a survival mechanism, a way that people use to survive, to cling on to that belief so that they can survive in a seemingly insane world.

C: So they suffer as well

Yes. Murderers, rapists, evil-doers of all kinds. Do they suffer? Yes, they do. Where does karma fit into that? Well that is karma – people who hold on to that level of evil, and then perpetrate it onto others are doing it because of that karma. And their task within this lifetime, or some lifetime is to work at transcending that. All of us are given challenges. As conscious beings who are struggling through the illusion of materiality and density toward the reawakening or realization of who and what we truly are, the full realization. So, do I like the fact that there are murderers and evil-doers and rapists? No, I don't, I don't like it at all. You don't have to like it, but you have to accept it, at least in concept.

C: Love your enemy

That is exactly the truth. That is exactly what Jesus was saying. "Turn the other cheek," means to not resist inside. It doesn't mean that you don't stop somebody from doing evil, if you have the opportunity. It doesn't mean that that person shouldn't be punished. It doesn't mean that you allow things to happen, or that you like the things that happen. It means you give up your inner resistance. You have compassion. Hate the deed, not the doer. Do your best to help the doer see his or her ignorance, to see his or her error and to make the change that they to become also...

Do you really think that somebody who in his or her heart has inner peace, is calm, connected to all that is would do something like that? So

C: Accept the unacceptable

That is absolutely true. You have to accept the unacceptable. And, again, it doesn't mean you have to like the unacceptable; you simply have to stop resisting it in your mind and in your heart.

Remember Carl Jung's dictum: "What you resist persists." That is why Jesus said, "Turn the other cheek." If you want to become what Jesus became, or what he realized, or what the Buddha became, or what the Buddha realized and live that way, you need to drop all resistance.

Q: Does it take less energy to resist or accept?

It takes less energy to accept.

Q: Are mental illnesses sometimes the reason?

Mental illness is maybe a scientific way of describing karma, bad karma.

C: Change what you can

Yes. Remember the Serenity Prayer that they say in 12 Step Programs: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the Courage to change the things that I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference."

C: The concepts are so beautiful and simple and sound, but when you come to apply them they are so hard to apply

I remember this comment from an earlier dharma talk. And that is why we have to practice because we have these resistances. Everybody here, or most people here are familiar with Eckhart Tolle, who is telling people the same message. He is giving the message about the Power of Now from an enlightened perspective. But he didn't have to work through resistances to get his enlightenment. For whatever reason, who knows what it was? Karma, or just spontaneous combustion, or whatever it is, he achieved an enlightened state. His ego just dropped away like that. He went from a state of extreme depression, suicidal depression and mental agitation to a state of complete enlightenment. Just like that, he made a quantum leap.

C: What did he do to achieve this state?

He did nothing. He was asleep one night, he woke up in the middle of the night, he heard a train going by in the distance. He was feeling depressed, he was feeling suicidal, he was feeling like life is not worth living, "I can't stand this anymore." And then all of a sudden he heard a voice and felt this feeling like going through a tunnel or falling. And he fell asleep. He heard a voice saying, "Don't resist." When he woke up the next morning he was enlightened.

C: Sounds like the conversion of Saul

Exactly. He went from a very dense, egoic, resistance state to a state of enlightenment. Would that we were so lucky.

C: LSD?

Well, that's not how Eckhart Tolle did it, but LSD can give you the same kind of experience. The only problem with LSD is that the experience you get, while it may be profound and it may be an absolutely pure state of enlightenment, it won't last if when you come down from it the resistances that you had are still there. A near death experience is another example. People are clinically dead and then resuscitated.

C: It's all when the mind chemistry changes; it's in our brains all the time

Yes, it is. The problem is that the resistances are in our brains, too. Those neurochemical, neuroelectrical pathways are engrained into our nervous systems. And so we need to figure out ways to change those pathways so we can get back to the state that we were in when we were born, and that is who and what we truly are.

Enlightenment is not a question of achieving anything. I have said this time and time again. Enlightenment is not an accomplishment. There is nothing to work towards. Enlightenment is who and what you are. The only thing standing between you and enlightenment is your resistance. And so the question becomes, "How do I let go of these blocks that I developed?" Nobody else developed them, you developed them. You put them in place, and you maintain them in place. As much as you might not want to take responsibility for them, they are your creations. They are like Frankenstein's monster.

C: Damn hot coals

Yes. To use that analogy from the last dharma talk, they are damn hot coals. But we still hold on to them. So how do we let them go? How do we let them go?

C: Tear down the wall

Yes, how do we tear down the wall? We tear down the wall with an Integrative Practice. The most efficient and effective way of tearing down the wall is with this idea of an Integrative Transformational Pathway, uniting body, mind, spirit and emotions. Doing a practice that develops all four of these major areas of our existence, of our consciousness. To me, the biggest resistances are in the emotional phase. It's like, "Yeah, I know that I should be compassionate. Yeah, I know that I should forgive. Yeah, I know that I need to be more accepting. Yeah, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know." We all know. But insight is not enough. We have to translate that into action, into realization. And so each time we come up into a situation and we can feel the resistance building up in us, we can feel that hot coal getting hotter and hotter and burning us on the inside, that's when we need to say, "Ahh, here's another one of those resistances that's keeping me from realizing who and what I truly

am. Keeping me from feeling my connectedness, my oneness with all sentient beings, with all creation, with all that is. And I don't want to drop it, so how can I drop it?

The first step is to take responsibility for it. To say, "I'm the one creating this; it's not the person on the outside who is creating it. Where are you feeling it? On the outside or the inside? Whatever you are feeling on the inside you have to take responsibility for it. And then the next step is to do something that will allow you to let go of it. Either meditation, where meditation is the idea of shifting your attention so you're not dominated by those thoughts, by those emotions, or, if that's not enough then you do some kind of releasing technique, whether that's some kind of inner dialogue, or an energetic releasing technique like EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) that I teach.

I happen to like EFT because it works better than anything else I have tried in the nearly 40 years that I have been doing this. It just cuts through all of the resistance and allows you to balance out your energy system so that the resistance, the negative energy that's bound up in that particular issue is discharged. So that it just doesn't bother you anymore. It's no longer a factor; it's no longer troubling you.

Q: What is EFT?

For all of you who are new. Go to my website <http://brightpathway.com> and you will find a tutorial on EFT, Emotional Freedom Technique, that you can download, and it will teach you how to do EFT. And there's lots more information there if you want to read up more about it. It is a releasing technique that uses acupuncture meridian points. Instead of using needles, you tap on those points while holding in mind whatever issue is troubling you. It literally dissolves the negative emotions, it discharges the negative emotions attached to that issue so that it doesn't bother you anymore.

C: Ahh, mind/body

Yes. That is the whole purpose of my teaching and my practice. It is to tell people we are one thing, we are pure energy, but that energy manifests in four different modalities: body, mind, spirit and shadow (emotions). And that if we want to realize, reunite with our true selves, which is the whole purpose of being here on this planet, there really is no other goal, then we need, if we want to accelerate that progress, we need to use a Unified, Integrated practice. So doing a practice that involves your body, doing some sort of physical exercise and taking care of your body through proper diet, and through personal ecology. Through your mind by studying philosophies and world views and religions and spiritual teachings that open your mind to more expansive ways of thinking. Through spiritual work like meditation, getting in touch with pure spirit. And also taking care of the emotional resistances, which is the least attended to of most spiritual practices and most religions. And most gurus and spiritual teachers leave out this part

and focus only on the meditative practices, but this is a big omission, because it's one thing to enter states of spiritual bliss while sitting on a cushion, but it's a big leap between that and feeling spiritual when you're stuck in traffic, or having a disagreement with your spouse, or have bills to pay that you don't have the money for.

You want to involve all four of those areas: Mind, Body, Spirit and Shadow. The resistances we were talking about before. Because when you are in one of those situations where something is bothering you, then you feel that resistance, you feel that hot coal inside. That's it. That's the point at which you need to intervene.

C: Sorry to monopolize

No, there's no monopoly at all. I think that everybody has been getting benefit from the things that I have been saying. Perhaps in our next dharma talk we can do a little bit of an Integral Practice, or Pathway. If you go to my website, <http://brightpathway.com>, you will see that there is a chart with suggestions how you can create your own Integrative Transformational Pathway. There are things you can do for your body, there are different kinds of exercises, there are things you can do for your mind, there are things you can do spiritually, different kinds of meditations, and there are things you can do to work on your Shadow, work on those resistances that you haven't been able to let go of yet. Because let's face it: we are all part of "all that is". And "all that is" is one seamless field of conscious loving energy.

And so if we're not experiencing ourselves as conscious loving energy right now and all the time, then there's something getting in the way. So our job is to figure out what is getting in the way and let it go. Why would you want to hold on to something that keeps you from realizing the miracle that you are and that is in every moment?

C: Because it must have some great importance to you

Yes. Absolutely correct. It does have some great importance to you. It is a survival mechanism. It is a strategy that you developed, that your ego developed to help you deal with feelings of disconnection and fear that were developed in your earliest stages of life.

C: Exactly, it's scary to let go of it.

That is the problem. There is the answer. We are afraid to let go. We feel that if we let go of those strategies then we will have nothing. The ego would rather survive on crumbs, than to give up those crumbs and just turn around and see a 12 course meal set on a table, just behind it. Because the ego is by definition, separate, disconnected, in a state of lack, and afraid. So as long as we are going to identify with that kind of energy, we are going to have problems. Does that make sense?

Q: What is the id?

The id is a psychic structure posited by Freud of all of the unacceptable primitive impulses that we have. But Freud based his theory on the study of people who were pathological, and on a society, a culture that was pathological. If you go to my website, <http://brightpathway.com>, and you go to the section on Family/Child Issues there is an essay I put there on The Continuum Concept, which I believe is the most important discovery of the 20th century. And in that essay The Continuum Concept you will find the answers to why the ego develops, why we develop a sense of separation, and lack and poverty. And why we respond to that sense of separation by creating all sorts of neurotic and evil strategies and behavior patterns, and maladaptive behavior patterns. And why we hold on to them, even though they are like a hot coal in our hands. Why we hold on to them instead of just letting them go.

C: They are not all maladaptive

Absolutely. The ego is not completely maladaptive, but a major portion of it is. The ego is what helps us to drive a car, for example; there's nothing maladaptive about that. Or if I ask you, "What's 2+2?" or, "How can I bake a loaf of bread?" Those are all adaptive ego strategies. The problem comes in when the ego creates strategies to deal with its prime premise. The prime premise of the ego is separation. And the prime directive of the ego is control. And that is why the ego does not want to give up the strategies it has developed.

Q: Separation from what?

Separation from who and what you truly are. As I said before, we are energy beings swimming in a sea of conscious loving energy. We should be experiencing that conscious loving energy as a feeling of love, bliss, ecstasy in every moment. Why aren't we? Why do we feel like shit a lot of the time? Because we have developed this feeling of separation.

C: It's natural?

No, it is not natural. That is what I am here to tell you. It is not natural. It is artificial. It's created out of separation and fear.

Q: Why does a baby emerge in the world crying?

I am going to defer that question and ask you to read that essay on The Continuum Concept on my website <http://brightpathway.com> and that will answer a lot of these questions. Babies that are born naturally don't emerge crying. Babies that are given Continuum treatment don't develop separate egos in the same way that Western people, or most of the people in the world do. Because they never experience a sense of separation. Does that answer the question sufficiently for now? Ok, terrific!

C: Because they think, "Hey I'm all naked but I don't get tipped."

That's right. But they don't come out wearing a G string that you can tuck those dollar bills under. That was pretty crude huh?

C: Change comes from within

It absolutely does. So practice that A-B-C exercise. Start yourself an Integrative Transformational Pathway, one that resonates well with you. It will be appreciated. I hope that what I share with you makes sense and is helpful in bringing you closer and closer to your own liberation.

Namaste

Jim