

9_3_25 Talk*

*This is an automatically generated transcript, so there are errors.

Speaker 1 [00:00:00] I'm going to speak to a question or two that has come in related to the meditation we did. I recommend that focus on opening has to do with something I read a while back as an instruction in Tibetan Buddhism. And it's, I think, useful to disengage from thinking too much about it and trying to analyze the very idea. Just kind of going more into the sense of it, oh, yeah, everything is continuously opening into the next, becoming the next opening into. And that at the heart of the continual process of change in reality is an opening into the next moment as the next movement emerges. As the next momentum emerges, it opens into reality in effect.

[00:00:54] So at the root of it all. The surface and basis of it all is an ongoing opening process, including in just directly observing kind of awareness as, you know, thoughts sort of bubble up and open up into awareness. They rise up into and open into awareness, you can simply experience that and recognize it. And then increasingly you get a sense of, oh, wow, are you, the opportunities to get a chance of this is my nature. You know, that you start to identify as opening. You identify with opening continuously as nature and lovingness and heartfulness helps us settle into this because it could feel a little, whoa, spooky to be opening continuously. I just want to say that about that part, and then I got a question, was it from, here we go, someone asked me this question, what do I mean by letting go? And what does anyone mean by let go?

[00:02:03] And so At a physical level, I think it's helpful to appreciate letting go. You know, we we grasp something and there's a place for holding on. And then when we let go, we literally let it go. We can let go of tension out in our body. We can like go of certain points of view, certain beliefs. We release. Exhaling is a form of letting go. And. If there is a constant worry, which is normal, common, let's put it like that. One aspect of letting go is allowing flowing. So think of worrying as process. It's flowing. We're allowing flowing to occur. And maybe we're disengaging from the flowing of worrying. And observing it, and feeling increasingly, you know, like the space in which a flowing of worrying is occurring. That's a kind of letting go. We're letting it keep going. If it's going to arise, we don't try to fight it, and we kind of let it continuously pass, and that often reduces worrying. Then, specifically, with worries, maybe there's a particular belief. That if you look closely at it you realize is not so true or there's a particular motivation that has to do with sort of preventing certain bad events and if you have the power to prevent them, prevent them. And if you don't have the power to about them, give up.

[00:04:07] Easier said than done, but that's what our choices are. If we don't have the power to prevent it, you can feel, let yourself feel a kind of primary first start apprehensiveness, even dread. It's normal, we're animals. It's normally to have certain primal dread, but do we have to add to it? And if we... Recognize that we're helpless if we don't have power we can't stop it. We can't make them love us We can make them return our call. We cant make them elect, you know, somebody different or Somebody the same we we don't have that power So there's a place for giving up and letting go of trying to make something happen that we're not able, we don't have the power to make it happen. It can be that kind of a letting go. That can really help to reduce worry. So now I would like to explore with you, as I said, this very important matter, which is a deep and fundamental question in psycho-spiritual practice.

[00:05:22] Basically, how do we balance making efforts with... The great perfection in some sense that already exists. How do we bring those together? Or to put it a more practical way, how do we together caring and not caring? How do bring together mattering and not mattering? How do together holding on and letting go? How do actually do that? So I wanna start with a quotation. I'm going to drop in quite a series of quotations tonight, and I will be sharing these with you in the follow-on email that we'll be sending. So I want to start with the author of Charlotte's Web and many other good things, E.B. White. He writes, I rise in the morning torn between a desire to save the world and a desire to savor it. This makes it hard to plan the day. So we want to save the world, but we also want to say for it. So I want to focus here on one side of the coin. So now I want to put another quotation and hear from good old Mark Twain. I think is so to the point. Do the right thing.

[00:06:52] Now, what is the right things? You get to decide for you what is your right thing? I actually have a little saying I created on the wall of my home office. It goes like this. Life is simple. Just do the next thing that you should do, whatever it might be. And so do the right thing. And you know, Mark Twain points out, it'll be a real surprise for many people. I'm just stunned by the number of people who don't do the thing. You know, and I don't mean holding a ridiculously high bar. I don't mean lacking compassion for the causes and conditions that lead them to do that. I'm just kind of blown out by lack of effort. Low integrity, breaking agreements, dropping balls, shrug, whatever. Like, whoa, you know? Not thinking about how what they might say next would land on a person. So. Without me being critical or righteous about it, hopefully, I just kinda wanna put on the table the whole notion. Do the right thing in the next moment, whatever it is.

[00:08:17] Now maybe the right is to take a big breath and sigh and relax and, you know, just walk away from some undone task because it's the right to do that. Maybe it's end of the day, maybe it's not the right things to do anymore. Maybe there's something more important. Maybe taking care of yourself is more important, but whatever it, you just, if you're surrendered to whatever is the next right thing. In an interaction, or in an email, or in the time that you have, life gets much simpler. Surrender to the right thing. The noble eightfold path in Buddhism, the fourth of the noble or ennobling truths, is sometimes translated as wise this or that, wise view, wise intention. Wise speech, wise action, wise livelihood, and so forth. Actually, the traditional word is much closer to, in English, the word right. It is the right view. It is right intention. It is rightspeech, right livelihood, right action, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

[00:09:37] As most of us, at least I do have, as a kind of rebellious spirit, I don't write, oh, it feels like some big boss or schoolteacher or Kafkaesque judge looming above me. Let's get past that. We decide what's right, but there is what's Right. And Right in the sense of correct, lined up properly, proper, distinct from wrong. You know, now you can choose your words. I go back and forth myself between wise and right. But there's something about the strength, the firmness, the uprightness. Right view, you know, seeing it the right way, doing the right thing in the next moment. And so much of what Buddhist practice is about is surrendering to that, which is right in the Next moment, the view that is right in the next moment, speech that is right in the next moment and so forth.

[00:10:39] I want to add another thing here that's very touching because sometimes it's hard to do the right thing, including in, you know, the world today. And this is from Wendell Berry in 1968. I was very alive and very aware at that time. The Vietnam War was in its heyday, America was in chaos, riots in the streets, police brutality in this in the American South and elsewhere Wow, and here's Wendell Berry. In the dark of the moon, in flying snow, in the dead of winter, war spreading, families dying, the world in danger, I walk the

rocky hillside sowing clover. That's doing the right thing, even when it's hard, even if it when it may not matter. So as we do this, I'm really inviting you here to reflect on maybe a challenging situation, maybe a project to work on or, you know, a tricky issue or maybe a health problem you have or maybe a relationship that's got some issues. And you might just keep asking yourself, okay, what am I called to do? What feels to me in my innermost being? To be the right thing in terms of thoughts, words and deeds. Often the right thing is to do no thing.

[00:12:31] A friend has the acronym WAIT, W-A-I-T. Why am I talking? Or Waste, as in, why am I still talking? But it's really helpful, you might ask yourself, what could be simpler for you if you simply surrendered to doing what you know in your heart is the right thing in that particular tough situation? Even in the dark of the moon, in flying snow, in the dead of winter with war spreading and families dying and the world in danger, what for you, as you walk your own rocky hillsides, is sowing clover, casting the seeds you can? What might that be? Here's where this perhaps increasingly well-known quotation from Nicosia Johnson is very apt here. And this was a, you may know, a young boy who was born with HIV AIDS in South Africa, died about age 12. During his short and beautiful life, he became a national advocate for people with HIV AIDS, including particularly children. And I routinely think about. The four aspects in this sentence here. Do all you can with what you have in the time you have, in the place you are. All you can, with what have, in the times you have in the places you are, that's all we can do. On our own rocky hillsides, right? That's all that we can.

[00:14:24] Then we have this, to me, just wow, piece of writing from Teddy Roosevelt. It is not the critic who counts. And this is gendered language, which I'll just read verbatim. It is NOT the critic, who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs, who comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcoming, but who does actually strive to do the deeds, who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat. Rousing words and you might change the gendering, you know, to one way or another in your own case to see if that feels better for you.

[00:15:53] What I would like to say here on this half of the truth we're exploring or the one truth, One of the two truths we're exploring here. There's some, it's often hard to do the right thing. We restrain ourselves. We don't have that third bottle or third glass of wine. We hold back what we really wanna say because it would not be right to say it, would not the most skillful thing to do or the most self-interested thing to do for ourselves. It's not always easy. We sustain effort. I think of times where you just keep on going even though it's really hard. That's the right thing to do. There's something heroic and noble in doing the right thing and I invite you into letting yourself feel it. As you do the right thing and as you keep doing the right thing, can you enjoy yourself? Can you appreciate yourself? Can you disengage from people who, and many people won't recognize or value that you're doing the right thing.

[00:17:00] Many people will try to undermine you from doing the wrong thing. And in that context, it's especially important to value yourself. What am I called in terms of thought, word, and deed? These are kind of the three classic categories. You see them recurring in Buddhism certainly a lot. Thought, word and deed. Acts of the mind, acts of speech, acts

with the body. Okay, I want to bring another quotation in here. This is from the Buddha, and then we'll start to here. This goes to right effort, which is one of the key elements of the Noble Eightfold Path. So I'll read it. And what is right effort? You generate desire for the non-arising of un-arisen.

[00:17:52] The Buddha was very thorough. The non- arising of unarisen, harmful, unwholesome states. You make an effort arouse energy, apply your mind, and strive. You generate desire for the abandoning of arisen, harmful, unwholesome states. You generate desired for the arising of un-arisen, wholesome states, and you generate desire for the continuation of unarisen wholesome state, for their non-decline. Their increase, expansion, and fulfillment by development. You make an effort, arouse energy, apply your mind, and strive.

[00:18:39] So we have essentially here preventing, I'm gonna use a very specific word, preventing what is bad. Reducing and releasing what is bad if it has arisen. That's the first two. The next, you make efforts to create, to foster that which is good, and to perpetuate and even increase that which is good. Pretty comprehensive. Really summarizes a lot of stuff. If you're looking for guidance, like, oh, what is the right thing? You could take a look at those four categories from the Buddha and ask yourself, huh, might there be an opportunity for one of them? And then a final quotation from classic Buddhism. This is from the Samyutta Nikaya, the very beginning of it.

[00:19:38] So the Buddha, a devata is like a spirit, you know, talking to the Buddha. Okay. And the devata asks, How dear, sir, did you cross the flood? Now, the flood is the metaphor for ordinary life that has inherent challenges. And then when we add craving to those challenges, ordinary life has a lot of suffering. It's not all of ordinary life, but it's a big chunk of it. How, dear sir, did you cross the flood? How did you get to the other side of all that? The Buddha says, by not halting, friend, and by not straining, I crossed the flood. Found that sweet spot in the middle there, the Goldilocks place. And the Devata asks, but how is it, dear, sir, that by not halting and by not straining you crossed the floods? Buddha replies, when I came to a standstill and halted, I sank. And when I struggled and strained, I was swept away. It is in this way, friend, that by not halting and not straining, I crossed the flood. I just really love this passage and the feeling of it and the Buddha reporting on his own practice over the years before his own awakening. In other words, He kept going, but he didn't strain in it. He stayed within his limits. He didn't create a breakdown by going past his own capacities. And I think that's a teaching for us all. Do we tend to halt or do we tend a strain? I tend to be a straining kind of person. I know people that are very close to me or tend to be halting kind of people. They procrastinate, you know, they do things 80% and then they halt. They would benefit from not halting. I have tried to learn how to not strain as I get a lot of things done each day. So you might consider this for yourself.

[00:21:55] So, this is kind of an overview that I wanted to offer to you. Hopefully helpful to you as you reflect on yourself how to make wise efforts, right efforts as you go through your day. Deliberate wise efforts which may include taking a break and getting off the wheel. That might be a fundamental wise effort for you. Now, I'd like to swing to some, so everything here so far. It's quite commonsensical. You know, it's, you get it, okay. Now I want to go to a deeper place. So this comes from Orgyen Rinpoche, who I believe is the father of both Sukhne and Mingyur Rinpochee, great teacher. He writes or teaches, the essence of all teachings of the enlightened ones is to simply let be in recognition of one's own nature. What is that nature? Dayun Sogaku-Rodashi says, There is something that

does not die. True nature does not disperse like a mist. Knowing true life, you can be at peace.

[00:23:40] So I talked about this in the last couple times we got together. You can understand true nature, I think, in kind of two levels, three levels. One is your own deep particularly when your mind gets a little quiet, you start getting a sense that the foundation of your being is actually relatively impersonal. It's not particularly gendered or personality-typed. There's an ongoing wakefulness and awareness. There's a benevolence, a lovingness, and a contentment and inner peace in the deep roots of everyone's being. If they slow down and take some time to be aware of that. Mysteriously, how in the world did we evolve a body mind that would have those qualities at its foundations? I don't know, maybe it helped our ancestors survive. It's just true. Deeper level of true nature is the ways in which we are all local expressions of reality altogether. That's factually true. Increasingly with practice, you can feel it. Your deep nature is kind of a oneness. It's like being a wave in the ocean. You are your own particular wave, and your nature is that you are really a manifestation of the whole ocean, and whose nature like yours is water. That's a deeper, and then the deepest of all, and these teachers, I think, are really pointing to it here, is a kind of transpersonal depth, like an ultimate embeddedness in the absolute. That might be conceptual. I'm not trying to make you believe anything.

[00:25:48] These are three kinds of deep nature that people point to. It's helpful to track the differences among them, not to be pedantic. To kind of know where you are or understand what people are talking about and to Get a sense of sinking, you know more and more deeply into what what draws your heart I think a meditation is resting on mind on what draws her heart. So these teachers are saying basically Alongside your striving, the deepest practice of all is to recognize who you always already were. And I want to quote here from just a phenomenal book, realizing Genjo Kwan, sounds very obscure, but it's quite profound, that the integration of totality and individuality is the way we actually live and the reason we must practice. Although the boundless moonlight is reflected in each drop of water, we must still care for the drop. That's the fundamental image of the moon in a dewdrop. The moon of true nature radiates in all directions. The dewdrop. Receives that radiance. And it might look like the moon is present in the dew drop, but simply the radiance of the moonlight is spreading in all directions throughout infinity, throughout the universe. And we can both appreciate that the dew drop is vanishing and impermanent, and still we can appreciate the moonlight in the Dew Drop.

[00:27:42] So again, if you, I'm inviting you to to hear these great teachers. My own journey has been moving me more and more in this direction. I worked a lot on the do the right thing side of the truth and now I'm increasingly engaged with and rooted in what these people are talking about. Hope you relate to this. You know, I feel it's my duty and I'm doing the right thing when I bring to bear both of these aspects of right action, broadly stated. So I want to drop another couple of quotations in here from Anne Klein I particularly like and then see if there's some things we could talk about here. Anne is a scholar, a teacher, I've met her and she a beautiful piece of writing. She writes, the sliver of difference that separates awakening from present experience is how we regard our own Buddha nature. If we don't recognize it, ordinary mind takes over and our true nature is obscured. If we recognize it We are Buddhas. She continues, recognize all practices and experiences as backlit by the sun of their own great completeness. Both of these are true. These are two truths that we're exploring here.

[00:29:20] In the one hand, deep down, our true nature is beautiful and complete already. We don't have to practice to construct, manufacture or fabricate our true nature and by

extension, the true nature of reality altogether. That's true, that's true. That's truth. And meanwhile, there are babies to be fed. There are toilets to flush, grass to mow, emails to send, meditations to have, doctors to visit, friends to say goodbye to. During the last. Years, days and minutes of their life. All of this is true. Both are true. Both are True. This is the great metaphor of practice being like a wagon with two wheels. You know, the path of gradual development and the path of realization already. True nature already. Side by side. Both are true.

[00:30:33] And I really want to invite you into considering both of these as true. For many of us, deepening into the second of these truths, the true nature aspect, is where the growing edge of your practice is. I love the feeling in the second truth of just kind of falling back and letting go into who you already are. So you might explore the felt sense in your body. Of what is it to like relax and fall back into a sense already of being just complete already. The neurotic mind is what it is, and running through it, pervading it, backlighting it, right, is like this complete all-rightness already, as you are. Can you feel it? Softening, giving up. For me it's it feels like giving up pretense, giving up trying to prove myself, giving up impressing others, giving up seeking narcissistic supplies. What's left is of course doing the right thing, manifesting and also living out your own actualizing, in other words, your own interests and passions and abilities. In ways that feel much more carefree and effortless. They feel less burdened and contracted when the wise efforts that you're making, the first truth, are alongside and in touch with an underlying all-rightness and underlying perfection already as you. So if you have not read, or studied, or pursued much, the later teachings in Buddhism, the Mahayana teachings in Tibetan, Chan, and Zen Buddhism. Certainly, Pure Land teachings deserve recognition as well. I really encourage you just to kind of explore these, you know.

[00:33:14] Sometimes you'll find this in non-dual teachings. I think of this quotation from Nisargadamaha Raj. Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me, I am everything. Between these two banks, the river of my life flows. Both. Both hand. Both hands. Most people, certainly me and my past, are very caught up in the first truth of striving and skillful striving and all the rest of that. And where the balance is is to truly, live more in the teachings of people like Nisargada and the Tibetan teachers and the Zen teachers are quoted here, where we're much more in touch with the sense of inherent completeness already. Nothing missing. It's like. Disturbances, people are dying, wars are happening, children are starving, faucets are dripping, dogs need to be walked, all that's happening. And there can be a sense of it all happening, all these disturbances occurring. In that which is fundamentally undisturbable. The category I'm encouraging people to look at if they haven't, it sometimes is called non-dual which really speaks to the underlying perfection and completeness and timelessness underneath it all. Also in the Mahayana, Mahayanna of Tibetan, Chan and Zen. Teachings, you find this orientation. I think that those teachings and particularly, you know, they tended to swerve a lot away from or kind of be a little dismissive of the original teachings of the Buddha, which focused primarily on the first truth with reference to the unconditioned, which he spoke to, spoke about in the second truth.

[00:35:41] And then later on the Mahayana teachings, to bat chan's end. Really swerved away from that emphasis on gradual development into a focus on recognizing true nature already. I find both are really important. And as you purify your mind, and therefore your brain, with the first truth, the gradual path, you become much more available to the second truth of the kind of immediate recognition of your nature already, so. Also, the complete quote from Lata, to my knowledge, and Nisargada was, wow, really amazing. Maharaj. Anyway, I believe the quotation that I saw was, wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells

me, I am everything. Between these two banks, the river of my life flows. Pretty cool, right? There's a quotation also from Kalu Rinpoche along these lines, something like you live in delusion, to paraphrase, when you recognize what is true, you realize you are nothing. And being nothing, you are everything. That is all. That is all. Kalu Rinpoche. If someone's interested in rumination, you know, it's just... I'll tell you a great way to hit a circuit breaker on rumination is to have just tune into your being, the first level of being deeper than personality, deeper than rumination. In other words, what is underneath ruminating? What is underneath righteousness or pissiness or addiction? What is underneath the craving? As soon as you tune in to what is underneath rumination, rumination fades. You may return habitually, including habit loops in the brain, but each time you drop beneath it. Decondition it. You start to associate the habit patterns of rumination with an underlying sense of what is beneath it. And then that kind of linking gradually deconditions rumination.